



Review rules out fresh measures after fatal accident

NO NEW ACTION ON POOL SAFETY

Report by Richard Guttridge

A POOL at a nature reserve in Dudley where a father drowned will not get new safety measures, Dudley Council has ruled.

A safety review was launched at the Fens Pool Nature Reserve's Middle Pool in Pensnett following the tragic death of Deon Mullings during a family picnic last July.

The 35-year-old, from Holly Hall, Dudley, had been playing ball games with his daughters at the beauty spot but failed to resurface after going into the water to retrieve a ball.

A schoolboy also had to be rescued from the pool in 2011 after falling 25ft down a bank.

Children regularly play beside the water and it was considered whether better protection was needed but bosses this week said changes would not be made at the council-managed site.

Environmental officer Matt Williams said: "The council has undertaken a review of safety at Fens Pool Nature Reserve, in conjunction with the coroner's report, which returned a verdict of accidental death.

Dangers

"The review found that there is no need to implement additional measures on site, however, the council will continue to build on its annual educational campaign which warns of the dangers related to open water."

Pensnett councillor John Martin said there was only so much the council could do but he believes signs around the nature reserve need to be made clearer.

He said: "Over the years sadly there have been fatalities. While I wouldn't want to see measures that spoil the beauty of the reserve and restrict access, I do think the council could introduce more safety signage, particularly around the pools."

"A lot of people who visit the area for the first time are beguiled by how beautiful and how calm the water actually is. They are surprised by how it becomes very deep very quickly."

Father-of-four Mr Mullings was pulled from the water by rescue divers and taken to Birmingham's Queen Elizabeth Hospital, but could not be saved.

CEMETERY SINGER DAN IS DIGGING X FACTOR SCENE



Sandwell Council grave digger Daniel Gardner, age 24, has made it through the first rounds of auditions for top TV show the X Factor

FROM digging to gigging – that's how a Black Country gravedigger hopes his career will progress.

Dan Gardner, from Rowley Regis, works at a cemetery in Smethwick and practises his singing while he is doing the day job.

After getting the thumbs up at his first X Factor audition in Birmingham, the 24-year-old has his foot on the first rung of the ladder to stardom.

Dan, who started as an apprentice gravedigger in September, wowed producers with his rendition of Roy Orbison's Cryin' and is

waiting to hear if he will appear on the ITV show.

The glamour of performing is a far cry from his main jobs, which include digging graves and maintenance.

However, the cemetery technician said: "It's the best job in the world."

"It's great to be able to help the public and is very fragile and delicate – customer service is 100 per cent important."

He added: "If I'm walking around the cemetery I'm always singing to myself."

"I also practise every night at home. I love

singing and I would absolutely love to do some gigs."

Singing is his passion and he hopes to progress in the X Factor to become a household name.

He was entered into the audition at St Andrew's football ground by his girlfriend Elisha.

Dan said: "I got through the first audition but now there's a wait before I hear if I can sing in front of the judges. But I'm confident they will pick me and I hope the X Factor can see I have got something different."



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CUTS

Bowls and croquet fees set to rocket

A CUT in funding for the maintenance of bowling greens and croquet lawns in Dudley could see player fees rocket.

Dudley Council provides £79,000 a year to help look after greens and lawns in the area but this funding looks likely to be cut under cost-cutting plans. The council is in talks with many of the borough's clubs over how the greens and lawns will be maintained in the wake of cuts.

Talks of the clubs entering a lease arrangement to enable them to access funding not available to the council or undertaking asset transfer are among options proposed.

EDUCATION

Improving school is now back on track

A SCHOOL that was told it had to improve has been recognised by the Government following a remarkable turnaround in its fortunes over recent years.

Blackheath Primary School is one of around 10 schools included in a Government programme after making improvements. The school in Britannia Road, was told it needed to improve by Ofsted following an inspection four years ago.

Staff rose to the challenge with a surge in standards catching attention in Whitehall. Headteacher Pali Nahal said: "It's rewarding our hard work as a school."

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CONTENTS	
MARK ANDREWS	6
LETTERS	7
GARDENING	14
REVIEWS	20
THE FAST TICKET	21
PROPERTY	30
MOTORING	36
SPORT	39 & 40
CONTACT US	

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Left laptop resulted in jail for perverts

A LAPTOP carrying indecent images of children has led to two men being jailed after it was accidentally left at Wolverhampton train station.

The computer was left at the station in February 2014, and when owner Christopher Williams, 52, returned to collect it, he was arrested.

In October that year, he was convicted of possession and distributing indecent images of children. He was given a non-custodial sentence.

Sharing

Officers also found that Williams, of no fixed address, had been sharing files with Harjit Sian, 42, and discovered he had sent him 22 indecent

images. When they searched Sian's home on Quinton Road West, Birmingham, they found a laptop and memory card containing 902 images and four videos.

He was charged with seven offences relating to the images and admitted the charges.

Sian was jailed for 18 months at Birmingham Crown Court earlier this month.

He was also placed on the sex offenders register for 10 years.

Supt Allan Gregory, from British Transport Police, said: "In interview, it was clear Sian did not comprehend the gravity of his offending or the impact it had on others.

"To him, they were simply images and he didn't associate them with the wider abuse of children, which would've taken place for them to exist.

Pursue

"We are satisfied with the sentence handed to Sian, which reflects the seriousness of the offences he committed and we hope it gives him time to fully consider what he has done.

"While the majority of the crimes we deal with are on the rail network, this case shows that we are prepared to pursue offenders beyond the tracks and we will do everything in our power to obtain justice for victims."

'Callous' hit and run driver sent to prison

A 'CALLOUS' disqualified driver who left a schoolgirl fighting for her life after mowing her down on a pedestrian crossing has been jailed for 33 months.

Adnan Ajram, who was electronically tagged, had been out with his girlfriend and was late back for a 10pm curfew when he overtook a car in Grange Lane, Stourbridge on December 17, and struck the teenager, a court heard.

Claudia Visser, aged 15, was seriously injured when hit by Ajram's Volkswagen Passat. He failed to stop and later abandoned the car.

The court heard that earlier that day the 24-year-old car valet had attended a 'thinking skills' session as part of his sentence for a previous driving offence.

Hannah Grove, a witness to the collision, said Ajram had overtaken her in a 30mph zone and was doing around 45-50mph as he approached the pedestrian crossing outside Pedmore Technology College.

Claudia, who had been out with friends celebrating the last day of the school term before Christmas, tried to step back onto the pavement.

The court heard she suffered a fractured skull, bleeding to the brain, both legs broken, wrist and collar bone fractures, and damage to her spleen.

She was hospitalised for seven weeks and still uses a wheelchair, although she can walk short distances with crutches.

When arrested, Ajram claimed his girlfriend had been driving and texted her telling her not to speak to police.

He made a 'heartfelt apology' for everything he had put Claudia's family through.

Judge Nicolas Webb told the defendant: "You are a callous and dishonest young man with no regard for the law and only interested in your own selfish ends."

Ajram, of Careless Green, Lye, pleaded guilty to causing serious injury by dangerous driving. He was also disqualified for driving for four years and ordered to pay a £120 victim surcharge.

Pc Karl Davies, of the collision investigation unit, said the family believed that the sentence could never be a true reflection of Claudia's long road to recovery.

Boat is a blooming good showpiece



Maureen Morley, Jon Jones, Sheila Campbell and Jeni Hatton launching the blooming boat

HALESOWEN'S quest for honours in this year's Britain in Bloom contest has been given an extra boost by the addition of a narrowboat named The Blooming Boat.

The boat will sit on land next to the traffic island at the bottom of Mucklow Hill to form the centrepiece of the town's floral display.

Halesowen walked away with gold during last year's regional awards competition, which is run by the Royal Horticultural Society. That was an improvement on 2014

when the town had to settle for a silver gilt medal.

Members of the Coombeswood Canal Trust have given their expertise and time to help this year's campaign. The original narrowboat was used at Stewarts & Lloyd tubes works at Coombeswood.

Eve O'Connor, Chairman of Halesowen in Bloom, said: "It's a fantastic event for Halesowen and something from which the whole town will benefit from. We have hundreds of volunteers already

involved in the event but we are always encouraging many more to come on board.

"We are always looking to improve on what we have previously done and The Blooming Boat is a great addition."

Judging for Britain in Bloom will take place on July 20 and the committee is hoping as many businesses, community groups, schools and individuals as possible will get involved in putting on floral displays.

Arrests are made after masked men strike twice

A CASHIER was threatened with a gun hidden in a bag as armed robbers struck two shops in Stourbridge within minutes.

Officers were alerted to a robbery at Tesco Express in Platts Road, Amblescote, just before 10.30pm on Monday, where it is believed a cashier was threatened with a firearm concealed inside a bag.

The masked men had struck just minutes earlier at a Co-Op store in The Broadway, Norton, less than two miles away, entering the store wearing balaclavas and demanding money.

A quantity of cash taken from both locations.

Thanks to a quick-thinking witness who noted down the getaway car's registration plate after the Tesco robbery, police were able to track the vehicle, believed to be a Vauxhall Zafira, to Bedcote Place around 11pm.

The driver, a 27-year-old man, was arrested while a 25-year-old man was detained nearby, and a cash till and clothing were recovered from the vehicle.

Both are currently being held in police custody on suspicion of robbery.

Detective Sergeant Kerrie Scriven, said: "We had the men in custody just 30 minutes after the robberies being reported to us and that's thanks largely to the swift actions of a witness who took down the getaway car's details.

"No-one was injured at either store but understandably staff who were threatened have been left badly shaken."

Entries invited for Black Country Run

RUNNERS are being invited to get in training to enter the 2016 Black Country Run being held in Halesowen.

The 10km road race is taking place on July 3 at 9am and is being organised by Halesowen and Rowley Regis Rotary Club.

More than 1,100 took part in the event in 2015 and entries can be made online at www.theblackcountryrun.com website.

There will also be a 5km fun run taking place on the same day, at 11.30am.

A total of £27,000 for charities was raised by runners last year bringing the total amount now raised since the inaugural event in 2012 to more than £77,000.

Two are hurt as van hits barrier on M5

TWO people were hurt when a van crashed into a barrier on the M5 on Monday.

The accident happened just after noon on the northbound carriageway between junction three for Halesowen and two for Oldbury.

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Councillor is stripped of role on authority

A COUNCILLOR suspended from the party pending the outcome of a police probe has been stripped of his role on the authority after failing to attend meetings for six months.

Councillor Derrick Hemingsley, Labour, who represents Wordsley, was suspended from the party at the end of last year but will now lose his title as a councillor under the terms of the Local Government Act.

Philip Tart, council strategic director for resources and transformation, said: "Councillor Hemingsley's term of office will end on April 21 in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972, as he took the decision to absent himself from council meetings for personal reasons."

Councillor Hemingsley is on police bail. Police confirmed a 55-year-old man had been arrested in Penzer Street, Kingswinford, on November 6, on suspicion of grooming.

Flags to fly in Netherton to remember Ivor

PLANS to erect a 20ft high flagpole in the centre of Netherton in memory of a community stalwart are set to go ahead.

The towering pole is to be placed next to the Titanic Anchor and has been recommended for approval by Dudley Council planners.

The scheme is in memory of Netherton legend Ivor Lucas, who died in September 2014.

Ward councillor Elaine Taylor said: "We wanted to pay tribute to Ivor who was a strong part of the community and very respected. We're very proud of this idea and where it will be situated is absolutely ideal."

Members of the public will be able to pay a small fee to fly the flag for their own cause on any given day.

Mr Lucas's daughter Fiona, 52, said she was delighted the scheme looks to have the council's backing. Her father was the chairman of Friends of Netherton Park and the Netherton Regeneration Group.

She added: "I think this is the perfect idea."

Asbo move over yobs near store

POLICE are ready to use anti-social behaviour orders to stop yobs causing problems outside an Old Hill supermarket.

Officers said Samra's Supermarket in Halesowen Road has been the target of repeated disorder by the same group of youths. Those responsible have been identified and police are aiming to get Asbos imposed on them

Surgery rated inadequate by inspectors



Quarry Road Surgery in Dudley Wood

A GP surgery in Dudley Wood has been rated inadequate by healthcare inspectors.

Quarry Road Surgery, on Quarry Road, which has more than 2,500 registered patients, was described as inadequate in its safety and management service, and has been told it requires improvement.

Another inspection will take place in six months and if progress is not considered sufficient it could face closure.

The practice has 2,670 patients registered under a General Medical

Services contract with NHS England.

The inspection took place on February 10 led by a Care Quality Commission inspector, GP specialist advisor, a CQC nurse advisor and a second inspector.

Key findings reported that incidents were managed effectively but not formally recorded, governance arrangements were not robust and the practice was not operating an effective system with regards to monitoring high risk medicines.

The Inspectors observed a friendly at-

mosphere throughout the surgery, noting that members of staff were courteous and helpful and that people were treated with dignity and respect.

But the surgery was found not to follow key protocols effectively and governance arrangements were not always robust.

Pam Bradbury, chair of Healthwatch Dudley, said: "Although this report is of concern to us we are confident the CQC is monitoring the recommendations and we will support them and Dudley CCG to enable improvements to be made."

Hospital investigates baby name tag blunder

THE boss of Dudley's Clinical Commissioning Group has called on the town's Russells Hall Hospital to conduct a thorough review after parents said their newborn baby was sent home with the wrong name tag.

Gemma Evans and Zeke Tennan feared they had taken home somebody else's child when the tag was discovered on baby Tyler Evans' foot at his home in Netherton.

Russells Hall has launched an investigation following the blunder and Dr David Hegarty, chairman of the CCG, which plans and buys health services in Dudley, said: "I can only imagine how distressing this is for the family of baby Tyler Evans.

"I am sorry to hear about this incident and understand the level of trust that the family placed on Russells Hall Hospital has not been met.

"This will be investigated thoroughly and the CCG is calling on the hospital management to review all aspects of this service, so that they can give assurance to Dudley people on the quality and safety of care being provided."

Gemma Evans said she was gripped by panic when she noticed the tag and had to double-check that it was her son Tyler.

Shocked

She criticised the hospital and said she could easily have taken home the wrong child.

Tyler was born on April 7 and was kept in until last Tuesday when he was discharged.

It was only later that day while changing him that Miss Evans, aged 26, noticed he still had his nametag attached – and to her horror that it had the wrong name on.

She said: "I was changing him and I realised he had the wrong nametag on his foot.

"I was shocked and angry, I just couldn't believe it.

"He could have gone home with the wrong family and we could have lost him.

"I was kind of panicking and I did think for a minute 'have I got the right baby?'"

"How can they make such a mistake? When the baby is being released how can they not check the name tag before the baby is taken home?"

Miss Evans said she and her partner Zeke Kennan, 21, had more serious concerns about whether their son had been mistaken for another child while undergoing tests in hospital.

He was kept in following his birth via a caesarian because of a chest infection.



Parents Gemma Evans and Zeke Tennan feared they had taken home somebody else's child when the wrong name tag was discovered on baby Tyler Evans' foot when they got home to Netherton

"She said: "What if they got the blood mixed up too – did he even have an infection?"

"He seems alright at the moment but we have still got to get him checked out. I'm really worried now."

Paula Clark, chief executive, of Dudley Group NHS Trust, which runs Russells Hall, said an investigation had been launched.

She said: "We take the safety and security of babies born and cared for at our hospital extremely seriously.

"We are undertaking a thorough investigation into concerns raised by the family of Tyler Evans.

"Unfortunately we are unable to comment further until the facts have been established and the investigation has concluded."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Osborne backs £200m offices

ONE of the UK's biggest property investors is backing a £200 million scheme to create Three Snowhill, a 420,000 sq ft office block in the heart of Birmingham.

It is the largest city centre office scheme outside London and has been hailed by Chancellor George Osborne as a step towards making the Midlands 'Britain's engine for growth'.

M&G Real Estate has confirmed it will fund developer Ballymore's scheme, which could house up to 4,000 workers. Around 450 construction jobs will also be created.

Shakespeare fun day at city library

A SHAKESPEARE-THEMED family fun day is taking place at the Library of Birmingham this Saturday.

From story-telling and performances to interactive craft sessions, the venue will be a hive of activity from 11am until 4pm.

Visitors will be able to make ruffs, cuffs, and other items of Elizabethan finery with artistic experts from Birmingham City University in a 'Being Shakespeare' workshop and also take 'selfies' dressed up with Shakespearean props courtesy of Birmingham Repertory Theatre.

56,000 treated at urgent care centre

MORE than 50,000 patients have been treated at an urgent care centre since it opened 12 months ago to take pressure off the busy accident and emergency unit at Russells Hall Hospital.

The site replaced the walk-in centre at Holly Hall in Dudley. Since it opened in April last year, more than 120,000 people have been through the doors. Of these, 56,000 have attended the urgent care service for assessment and treatment.

Tug boats return for museum's canal event

TUG boats will be chugging their way to the Black Country Living Museum in Dudley for a boating extravaganza next weekend.

Tug boats were an essential part of the canal network across the West Midlands, and a driving force in the industrial revolution. Visitors over the May Day bank holiday weekend (April 30 to May 2) will be able to see the old boats in action.

For more information visit the www.bclm.com website.

Vintage vinyl at fair

A VINTAGE vinyl records and craft fair is being held at a Stourbridge visitor attraction next month.

The fair will be taking place in the Ruskin Glass Centre in Wollaston Road, Amblecote, on Sunday, May 8, 11am to 4pm, featuring a variety of stalls.

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"WHAT'S an ansadoo?" Question asked by a reader's small child on first hearing the song: "Daisy, Daisy, give me your answer, do"

SUMMER approaches, the garden goes mad. So, on a whim and for the first time in many years, I tuned into The Archers, just to see if they had any topical horticultural tips. Not a chance. It seems to be mostly about killing imperfect husbands. I'm not angry. I'm just disappointed

THINGS to do on a rainy day. The Government pro-EU leaflet is snappily entitled "Why the Government believes that voting to remain in the European Union is the best decision for the UK." A reader tells me that with skilful use of a black marker pen he has retitled the leaflet: "Government lie: voting to remain in the EU is the best decision for the UK."



JEREMY Corbyn, who voted against the Common Market in 1975 and against the Lisbon Treaty, is trying to convince the British people that he really supports the EU now. If nothing else, Jez is giving our fellow Europeans a lesson in colloquial English by demonstrating that useful term "lukewarm".

SO who was the villain and whose vested interests were being served by this week's disclosure that Tory media minister John Whittingdale went out with a dominatrix? Was it the pressure group Hacked Off, out to take a newspaper scalp? Was it the wicked Press, out to blackmail the minister? Or was it the BBC, eager to pile on pressure to keep the TV licence? This is an issue involving that old concept "the public interest." But the real public interest, the question that will not go away, the burning issue that Joe Public wants answering, is nothing to do with the Beeb, the Press or Hacked Off. It is simply this: How do you go out with a woman for six months and not know she is a dominatrix? I think we should be told.

Don't miss Peter Rhodes every Monday to Friday in your Express & Star

Thief took cars worth £100k to pay off debt

A COURIER who stole £100,000 worth of cars in four months to pay off a debt was this week starting a three year jail sentence.

Wajid Riaz targeted high value second hand motors being sold by dealers or advertised in Auto Trader, Wolverhampton Crown Court heard.

The 30-year-old, who had a previous conviction for stealing vehicles, struck first after meeting a man who was selling an almost new BMW M4 worth £50,000.

By John Scott

The defendant asked to take it for a test drive and roared off leaving the owner standing in Overend Road, Cradley Heath, said Mr Michael Conry.

But he did not get far, crashing just minutes later and abandoning the badly damaged vehicle after stealing it on June 16.

He was also involved in the theft of a £39,000 Audi A7 from a dealership in Hopwood, near Birmingham, three months later. While viewing the vehicle Riaz switched the ignition key and two other men returned to steal it two days later on September 21.

It had already been stripped for parts by the time it was located 24 hours later.

Next Riaz met a motor dealer from Cheltenham on September 23 to discuss the purchase of a £9,000 BMW 3 Series during which he switched keys before coming back to take the car later in the day.

But the key play backfired

a week later when somebody tried to use the key fob he had exchanged for the real one — and realised what had happened — before he had time to steal a £31,000 Audi A7 in Coventry.

Riaz used the same ruse on October 27 to take an Audi A6 from a woman in Leicestershire who had advertised the vehicle for sale in Auto Trader. But it was traced through a tracker device on the vehicle. Twelve hours later the car had false registration plates when police found Riaz at the wheel and arrested him.

Mr Jasvir Mann, defending, said: "He was a self employed courier and had borrowed £4,000 to buy a van for use in the delivery of parcels. Those who loaned the money put pressure on him"

Riaz, from Phillip Sidney Road, Sparkhill pleaded guilty to four car thefts and one attempted theft and was sent to prison by Recorder Simon Ward.

Trees making a comeback



Councillor Stuart Henley with one of the newly planted trees

REPLACEMENT trees have finally been planted in a Halesowen Street, two years after the originals were removed because they were considered dangerous.

Residents from Olive Hill Road had been left disgruntled after more than 12 trees were cut down by Dudley Council because the authority declared the trees were in a dangerous condition.

Residents complained to Councillor Stuart Henley about the loss of trees when he was campaigning for election in May 2014.

The Halesowen North councillor said: "I promised I would do all I could to get the trees replanted, either through the council or donated by a third party."

"It has taken over two years to get here but I have had seven trees replanted. I did want to get more but due to underground services this was not viable."

Councillor Henley added that he had been contacted by a number of residents welcoming the tree planting, saying that it would help to stop motorists parking on the pavement and assist with air quality.

He said: "Residents are happy the issue has finally been resolved."

Brewer is toasting deal with Finland

CRAFT beer from the Black Country will soon be served in bars in Finland after award-winning Stourbridge brewery Sadler's Ales won its first major exporting deal.

The Lye brewer will be shipping thousands of bottles of its Hop Bomb and Red Ale IPA to the Scandinavian country over the next 12 months as it looks to ramp up its overseas business, following a UK Trade & Investment trip to Latvia in November last year.

Ian King, sales director, said the three-day export insight visit had been an exciting catalyst for new business opportunities and markets.

Adviser

The brewery is also in advanced talks with distributors in Norway and Sweden, after the opportunities were spotted by Paul Keeling, the company's UKTI international trade adviser.

"It's an exciting time for the brewery and we are very pleased to be in the process of sending our first major consignment of beers to Finland, which will be sold in retail stores and bars across the country," said Mr King.

"It's the culmination of a lot of hard work by the team here but we are confident about the quality of our beers and are determined to get our brand known in as many territories as possible."

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Shakespeare anniversary celebrations

THE BBC is marking the 400th anniversary of William Shakespeare's death with a live programme from the Royal Shakespeare Company's various sites in Stratford over this weekend.

April 23 is not only the Bard's birthday but also marks 400 years since his death. Hosted by David Tennant and Catherine Tate, those involved in Shakespeare Live will include Dames Judi Dench and Helen Mirren, Benedict Cumberbatch, Sirs Ian McKellan and Antony Sher, Meera Syal, members of the Birmingham Royal Ballet, singers Gregory Porter and Alison Moyet. The show will be broadcast live from 8.30pm on BBC Two.

Amateur performers are also celebrating the Bard's anniversary with a variety of different tributes. On Saturday singers from Elmfield School in Stourbridge, Old Swinford Hospital School and Summerhill Choral Society from Kingswinford will perform a Youth Showcase Concert at St James's Church in Wollaton.

The choirs will perform several arrangements of Shakespeare's songs which he wrote for inclusion in his plays, and the event is organised by Local and Live, a non-profit-making group based in Stourbridge, assisted by Irish composer Shaun Davey.

For tickets, £9, contact (01384) 377162. Under-18s get free admission.

Airport has an extra 100,000 passengers

BIRMINGHAM Airport is celebrating a record-breaking run of 13 months of consecutive growth, as an extra 100,000 passengers travelled through the West Midlands gateway in March.

Last month saw 830,544 passengers in total flying in and out of Birmingham. The growth comes alongside the airport's success offering new routes.

Councillors share heartache over the death of leader

Hat's the way for the mayor to say thanks



Maisy Neale, aged 15, from Halesowen, is trying on the mayoral hat with Dudley Mayor and Mayoress Steve and Jayne Waltho. DUDLEY Youth Council received a warm welcome at the Council House from the borough's mayor and mayoress.

Members of the youth council were welcomed into the Mayor's Parlour for a formal thank you for the work done on behalf of young people in the Dudley area.

Mayor Councillor Steve Waltho

was full of praise for the youngsters who had been 'highly commended' at the recent Dudley Council for Voluntary Service awards.

He said: "The youth council do such great work in the borough we wanted to invite them over to the Mayor's Parlour to say thank you."

One of the visitors, Maisy Neale, aged 15, from Halesowen, posed with

the Mayor and Mayoress trying on the mayor's hat.

"They were all very grateful for the visit and liked the hospitality and to be formally thanked," the mayor added.

The youth council uses local authorities such as Dudley Council as a model and has young representatives for areas of the borough with elections held for candidates.

"WE all miss Darren but his legacy will live on." Those the words that echoed around the Sandwell Council chamber as members paid tribute to popular former leader Darren Cooper at the first full council meeting since his sudden death.

An emotional session was dedicated almost entirely to Councillor Cooper, with several councillors honouring their former leader, who was dubbed 'Mr Sandwell'.

His deputy and friend Councillor Steve Eling, who is now acting leader, delivered a rousing speech in which he pledged to continue the work that was done under his leadership.

Tributes were paid to the married father-of-three, who was leader of the Labour-controlled authority since 2009 and a councillor for 25 years, following his sudden death last month at the age of just 52.

A civic memorial event will be held in his honour at West Bromwich Town Hall tomorrow, Friday. He was a passionate Baggies fan and a familiar face at the Hawthorns. He had been touted as a future MP as well as a possibility for the role of the West Midlands' first metro mayor.

Councillor Eling told members: "It is a massive loss and it is a challenge for somebody else to pick up and do what Darren has done over the years."

"As leader of the council he has taken us through the most difficult time in history, other than wartime, for local government."

"The cuts from 2010 are the most severe that have been imposed on local government and to carry the council through that as leader is an incredible task. We all miss Darren but his legacy will live on."

Mayor Barbara Price, who led the meeting at Sandwell Council House in Oldbury, said: "It's been a devastating blow to everybody. It just hurts at the



Legacy - Sandwell's Darren Cooper

moment." Councillor Paul Sandars said the authority now has an 'enormous hole' to fill. He said: "He was the salt of the earth, a Black Country lad made good."

"People have said he almost certainly would have been an MP and maybe higher than an MP. He was one of us. He was a friend."

Councillor Peter Hughes said: "I shall never forget that cheeky grin and the winks he used to give me. I was 10 years his elder but he was a mentor to me."

Councillor Maria Crompton said: "He was my friend, I love him and miss him."

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IN MY VIEW

with Mark Andrews



‘Kerb’ your enthusiasm to park on pavement

YOU might think with the EU referendum and all the other rows going on at the moment, that the Government had got its hands pretty full and didn't really need to involve itself with any other distractions.

But no, give anybody in authority the chance to meddle, and they will take it with both hands. The latest wheeze is to ban us from parking on the kerb, to 'de-clutter' our roads and encourage more people to walk. Yep, that's just what the country is crying out for, isn't it?

I always thought decluttering was what Carol Smillie did on those awful decorating shows in the 1990s. But it seems the powers-that-be are offended by the sight of our cars being parked on the pavement. Presumably they hope issuing a few tickets will see us all happily get rid of them and cheerfully march to work singing The Internationale.

The ban on kerb parking is to bring us into line with London, where it has been prohibited for the past 40 years. But of course, getting around the capital is easy, because they have an underground railway. Does anybody in Westminster realise we don't actually have that luxury? Here's a better way to declutter our roads. Build wider ones with more parking.

□ □ □

THERE has been much consternation about the fact that Wolves' new sponsor next season will be payday loans company Money Shop. Perhaps, while they're about it, it might be time to change the motto on the badge. Out of darkness cometh debt, anyone?

□ □ □

STILL, the murmurings surrounding Wolves are nothing compared to the discontent around my club, Aston Villa.

Former winger Steve Froggatt contrasted the highly-paid players who have failed so dismally this season with the plight of the modestly-paid stadium staff who now face losing their jobs because of the team's slide into what I still call the Second Division.

Froggie suggested that the superannuated players could redeem themselves by donating a share of their salaries to save the jobs of the club staff.

To me this sounded an eminently sensible suggestion, but I can't see it happening given that £9m midfielder Idrissa Geyue is already demanding a transfer, saying that relegation wasn't part of the agreement, while the terminally mediocre Leandro Bacuna thinks he should be playing in the Champions League rather than the Championship.

Still, champion Joleon Lescott says seeing the humiliation confirmed was a weight off his shoulders. So every cloud has a silver lining. Dozens of ordinary working people face losing their jobs, the club will suffer the indignity of playing at a level they last endured in 1988. But still, Joleon now feels able to relax.



Terror victims, Patrick Evans, Joel Richards and Adrian Evans



The logo for the charity Smile for Joel, to help victims' families



Owen, who lost his brother in the attack, with the wristbands

We want their names to never be forgotten

An inspirational mother and son have set up a charity to help families hit by atrocities. **DAVID COSGROVE reports**

'I WANT their names and beautiful caring ways to live on forever through their legacy.'

These were the words of a Black Country mother whose son, brother and father were killed in the Tunisia terror attack, as she launched an appeal to support other victims of mass atrocities.

Suzu Richards and her surviving son Owen, aged 16, have created 'Smile for Joel' to support others who have lost family members in a similarly harrowing manner to themselves.

The fundraising charity – which has been backed by David Cameron – will work with Victim Support to help families who have become victims of traumatic bereavement, particularly through homicide.

Ms Richards said it will help keep the memories of her son Joel, brother Adrian and father Patrick alive, who were killed by Islamic State terrorist Seifeddine Rezgui in June.

Previous

Aspiring football referee Joel, 19, was tipped for the top and was extremely close with his uncle and grandfather.

The triple loss tore Ms Richards' family apart, but she said the backing of Victim Support since the tragic incident has helped them move through the grieving process.

Ms Richards said: "I had never heard of [Victim Support] before but they turned up about five days after it happened and the support they gave Owen initially was fantastic.

"Since then the support for the family has been brilliant as well – and they are still supporting us now.

"In the darkest days they actually became part of the family – they were with us through everything and helped with everything, right down to arranging counselling.

"What they do is fantastic.



David Cameron, who backed the wristbands scheme, seen with Suzy and Owen Richards

"We decided to call it Smile for Joel because Joel was the youngest victim and I want to keep all their names alive.

"I want to make a difference for others for them.

"They were three of the nicest, most caring guys you could ever meet and would do anything for anybody.

"I want their names to be part of helping others.

"They were just three everyday guys who went on holiday who were sat there one minute and then they were murdered the next."

Dozens of Joel's friends have taken photographs with Smile for Joel wristbands at different locations across the globe.

Ms Richards penned an emotive mission statement on Smile for Joel's Facebook page.

It says: "After losing three very precious family members last year in the Tunisian ter-

ror attacks my loving family will never be the same. We are shattered, broken and every day is a colossal struggle for not having them here with us.

"To go from a family of six to three for just going on holiday, is an unbearable pain and has left an emptiness that we know will never go away. In the midst of this heartache I am determined to stand strong for my remaining family.

"Like any mom would, I want to strive to make Owen's life the best I can, especially after being the sole survivor in my family on that fateful day.

"I am also determined to not let the lives of my son Joel, my dad Pat and my brother Ade be forgotten. I want their names and beautiful caring ways to live on forever.

"I want to make a difference to others for them.

"I want to make a difference in their name for others who have experienced losing someone they love in such a heartbreaking traumatic way.

"Therefore, Smile for Joel in its own right will become a fundraising charity to support Victim Support and help shattered/ broken families who become victims of a traumatic bereavement through homicide including terrorism.

"Not every family has the love and support we have had and continue to have from our family, friends and our community and I thank you all immensely for that.

"So together, with your help, my plan is to continue to make smiles for Joel."

The money will be distributed through Victim Support.

Ms Richards has encouraged people to come forward with fundraising schemes.

A batch of Smile for Joel wristbands has been made and people have been encouraged to take photos of these at different locations around the world.

Astonished

Wednesday North ward Councillor Elaine Costigan said the family's strength was 'inspirational' and Smile for Joel was a perfect way to keep memories alive.

She said: "I'm just astonished at how strong she is.

"I think this is really helping to keep Suzy going and I know how much she wants to keep their names alive.

"It's special – I think both Suzy and Owen are inspirational.

"They're so strong together, it's amazing. I don't know where they find the strength from but somehow they manage it.

"We all support whatever they want to do."

The families of those killed in the Tunisia terror attacks attended a memorial service at Westminster Abbey along with Prince Harry and Prime Minister David Cameron.

At an event after the service, Owen managed to chat to Mr Cameron about the cause, and the PM was photographed with the teen and Ms Richards wearing one of the wristbands created for the cause,

Anyone who wants to raise cash for the charity is asked to email smileforjoel@aol.com.

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Korean war graves photo appeal

I AM acting on behalf of the authorities at the United Nations Memorial Cemetery Busan, South Korea, where more than 800 British Servicemen are buried.

The authorities wish to obtain photographs of those servicemen interred there and of those who died but have no known grave. The photographs will be displayed on the walls of the Cemetery Hall of Remembrance. The following are just a few of the young men from the West Midlands who gave their lives in Korea: Pte Percy J Smallshaw, Gnr Vernon F Bayley, Cfn Stan-

ley J Amphlett, Cpl Ronald G Davies, Spr Ronald Harvey, Mne William L J Jauncey, Maj Peter B Stephenson, Pte Frederick Gill, Fus Francis H Roberts, Cpl Norman Fene-mer, RE/A Kenneth P Jordan, Fus Derek E Tamblin, Cpl David N Fellows, Rfn Kenneth Fletcher, Cpl Ronald B Babb.

Those who lost a loved one in the Korean War 1950-53 can send the photograph to me: Brian Hough, 116 Fields Farm Rd, Hyde, Cheshire SK14 3NP; 0161 368 5622 or 07467037742, bough116@gmail.com
BRIAN HOUGH

No need for bypass congestion

RECENTLY the congestion on the Dudley bypass has been terrible, all due to grass cutting on the islands.

Lanes were coned off, obviously for safety reasons, but why when work was finished were the cones not immediately removed. Delays could have been minimised.

The congestion was horrendous, all the way back to Burnt Tree and also back to Russells Hall Hospital. This was also very dangerous for emergency vehicles.

While stationary, it was unavoidable to not notice all the rubbish along the bypass. As Dudley Council keep saying they are looking to attract businesses to locate in the area, but I'm afraid what I saw gives a very negative impression.

Why not use artificial grass on the islands (no maintenance), do the work at night, and clear the rubbish regularly.

When work starts on the improvements for Pensnett, I hope traffic management is vastly improved.

P WINCHURCH
Dudley

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST

Dudley Chronicle,
Chronicle Editorial,
51-53 Queen Street
Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES

EMAIL

dudleychrons@
expressandstar.co.uk

Letters should be brief and **MUST** include name, address and telephone number number. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

So, would you be a Yo Yo or a Yam Yam?

WE recently had a bosta of a night at Cradley Library to launch the second phase of the Where's Our Spake Project.

It is a project I have been involved with since the outset through Aston University and Rights and Equality Oldbury. The centre piece of the night was a film (second in the series) made by Geoff Broadway. It used extracts from oral interviews with Cradley people.

While watching the film one of the participants was asked about the term 'Yam Yam' and made a great comment that he had no idea where it came from. As far as he was concerned we here in the Black Country are Yo Yo's and you would more likely hear Yam over the

border in Brummagem. I myself have always thought the Yam label seemed a little misplaced as I don't hear it very much when either performing across the region or carrying out interviews, such as the ones in the project above.

It's a fascinating project which touches down next in Oldbury and the Langley Lodge on the evening of April 29, so if anyone is interesting in seeing what Geoff has made of the data collected from my home town please come along. Meanwhile 'Bin yo' a Yam or a Yo'. Any information of talks, events just email b.dakin@aston.ac.uk

DR BRIAN DAKIN
(BILLY SPAKE MON)
Tividale

Leaflet is propaganda

DAVID Cameron's arrogance is breathtaking that he makes no apology for the £9.3 million of taxpayers' money spent on the so-called factual leaflet (read: propaganda) to remain in the EU.

That the decision to produce the leaflet was made by a meeting of his remain-in-the-EU ministers, that excludes the Brexit ministers, shows once again that he is adopting a classic EU attitude.

He claims that Britain is in the driving seat influencing EU decisions and time and time again British leadership at the top table gets things done.

The record shows that Britain has opposed 72 EU measures when all 72 were overruled and became law in the UK.

I have returned my leaflet to 10 Downing Street.

PHIL SCHLANKER
Stourbridge

Hippodrome – keep deadline

THERE were deadlines regarding the land recovery from the Muslim Association and there was much taxpayers' money wasted on legal proceedings to finally reclaim the land.

Now we have the Hippodrome issue. People trying to save this monstrosity were given a deadline to submit final plans and I read in last week's Chronicle that there are still talks going on – why? This issue needs closure and soon to save more money being wasted. The council needs to be clear on this issue for a change.

J ABBISS
Dudley

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Snowdon tragedy as walker plummets

A MAN from the Black Country has died after falling a 'significant' distance while walking on Mount Snowdon.

Kenneth Hands, aged 35, from Oldbury, is believed to have been descending a narrow ridge when he fell on the steep and rocky terrain. Rescuers said Mr Hands was on the mountain in North Wales with two friends, and had been forced back by heavy snow, when he fell to his death on Saturday April 9. His death was described as a 'tragic accident'. His body was winched aboard a coast-guard rescue helicopter from Caernarfon and flown to hospital at Bangor.

Coroner

He had been descending the narrow Crib Goch ridge – the scene of previous tragedies – when he fell.

A post-mortem examination has been held for North West Wales coroner Dewi Pritchard-Jones.

A mountain rescue team spokesman said: "The group did everything right. They turned around when conditions went bad – it was just a tragic accident. We don't know why he fell. But it was a significant fall."

"It had begun snowing quite heavily towards the top of the highest mountain in England and Wales when the walkers decided to turn back."

FOCUS ON OLDBURY

Trampoline centre looks set to bounce into action

A TRAMPOLINE arena will open in Oldbury, creating 25 jobs, after being given the go-ahead by councillors.

Bosses behind the firm Flip Out passed the final hurdle after members of Sandwell Council agreed to let the scheme go ahead despite breaching planning regulations. A disused warehouse on Churchbridge will be converted into an activity and play centre.

By Richard Guttridge

such as it is relation to one unit. Planning officers are also satisfied there isn't an alternative premises available that the applicant could use for the purpose.

"Clearly it is business use and there will be employment opportunities arising from it." Most councillors agreed with the vast majority backing the proposals. The company has said it will only need to make slight changes to the building to convert it into the activity arena. And Oldbury councillor Mahboob Hussain believes it is a smart move. He said: "There is not much to do for young people in Oldbury and it is in the right location near the motorway so I think a lot of people will come from all over Sandwell and the West Midlands."

"It's really nice to see any jobs in Oldbury."

Bullring owners to create retail park



An artist's impression of the new shops complex proposed for Oldbury by the owners of Birmingham's Bullring

A RETAIL park will be built on a former foundry site in Oldbury. It will be built by the new owners of Birmingham's Grand Central shopping centre.

Shops including a discount foodstore will be built on the 12-acre site in Bromford Road, after planning bosses approved it subject to recommendations.

Councillor Peter Allen, of the planning committee, said: "We unanimously approved the plans as it will be a major plus to the town."

"To finally see it come together is great news."

"There will be one medium-sized supermarket and eight or nine other units and three outlets. They reckon it will be about a year to build once it gets started in the next few months."

The scheme is a scaled-back version of plans for a retail site dubbed The Junction. A retail park was first mooted for the site near Oldbury Kingway 18 years ago. The site, near to

Sandwell and Dudley railway station, has long been empty

The new plans have been put forward by property group Hammerson, which owns Birmingham's Bullring centre and recently bought the city's new Grand Central shopping complex at New Street for £335 million.

Councillor Steven Frear, chair of planning, said: "There are a few details that need to be ironed out but we agree with the recommendations."

Firms must now reveal ownership



Warning – Helen Drew

AN Oldbury-based tax expert has warned that all companies now have to reveal who really owns the business. On April 6, the rules for the People of Significant Control (PSC) Register came into force.

Helen Drew, partner at the Oldbury office of national audit, tax and advisory firm Crowe Clark Whitehill, said: "If you fail to provide accurate information, you will be guilty of a criminal offence – which could carry a fine and/or prison sentence of up to two years."

According to the Office for National Statistics, there were 2.45 million enterprises registered for VAT and/or PAYE in March 2015. Almost all of these businesses – around 99 per cent – are small ranging from none to 49 employees.

The register is being drawn up in order to help increase transparency over who owns and controls UK firms, to help inform investors when they are looking at a company, and support law enforcement agencies in money laundering investigations.

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Thugs attacked father in shopping centre car park

A FATHER was dragged from his car and viciously beaten by thugs in front of his two children at Merry Hill shopping centre on a Sunday afternoon.

CCTV footage, released in a bid to catch the attackers, shows the 41-year-old man attempting to park his car when the trio walk out in front of him, causing him to break suddenly.

They were involved in a short verbal exchange and then two of the men pulled the father from his car before punching and kicking his head and body several times – all in full view of the man's two children, who have been left traumatised by what happened.

The thugs fled the scene in a white Mercedes, after the attack at around 1.40pm on April 3.

The man required treatment for minor injuries.

Appalling

Councillor Rachel Harris described the attack as 'appalling and unacceptable' and stressed the incident should be prioritised to catch the thugs.

She said: "To hear of such a violent attack is despicable, I really hope it is an isolated incident."

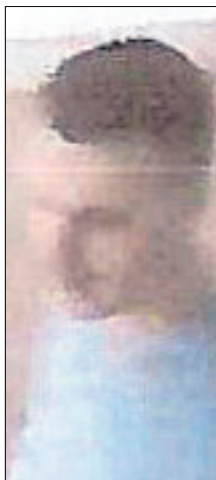
"People go to Merry Hill to socialise and shop in a secure and safe environment, not to be viciously beaten up by thugs who think they are above the law. I hope police catch the culprits as quick as they can and they should be named and shamed to stop them doing anything like this again."

"I've never heard of an incident like this before at Merry Hill and I hope I don't hear of any incident of this nature again."

Anyone with information should contact Detective Sergeant Leighton Shingles at Smethwick police station on 101, or Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.



Two of the men being sought by police



One of the men on CCTV

Addict is jailed for dealing

AN ADDICT trying to pay off a drug debt to his dealer was caught with heroin and cocaine, a judge heard.

Mark While was caught when police officers surrounded his stationary Fiat Punto in Tiled House Lane, Pen-snett, Wolverhampton Crown Court was told.

Miss Saleem Mahmood, prosecuting, explained that an officer smashed the driver's window with a baton after While locked the doors and grabbed the steering wheel as if to drive off.

Searches of the car and an address linked to the defendant unearthed a total of £1,930 worth of heroin and cocaine wrapped up into 193 street deals.

While, 40, admitted possession of both heroin and cocaine with intent to supply and was jailed for 16 months by Judge Kristina Montgomery QC.

He had claimed he had been dealing for pay off a debt of nearly £5,000 to a violent drug dealer.

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Plaque honour for a hero of Black Country athletics

A ‘COLOSSUS’ who competed at the 1908 Olympics has been honoured in his hometown of Halesowen.

A plaque was unveiled for Jack Price in the town’s Somers Square, while the drive at Halesowen Athletics Club’s Manor Abbey Stadium has been named after him.

Steelworker Mr Price competed in the marathon during the first London Games in 1908. He led for more half the distance but succumbed to the relentless pace he set and had to pull out in the 15th mile.

Speaking at the unveiling on Saturday, Mr Price’s proud grandson Mick Whitehouse, 74, said: “This is long overdue – but now it’s here it’s absolutely brilliant. When you weigh it all up he was a colossus of a man.”

In the 1920s Mr Price started the club which would go on to become Halesowen Athletics and Cycling Club. His links with it continued until his death in 1965 and club members turned up in their droves at the plaque unveiling.

A street near Halesowen Athletic Club’s Manor Abbey Stadium was also renamed Jack Price Way.

Cycling star Hugh Porter described Mr Price as ‘a hero and a legend’, adding: “You had to be so tough to do what he did – grafting and then having the strength to compete like he did.”

Councillor Ian Cooper said: “What he did was real Chariots of Fire stuff – hauling steel around all day and then running marathons. Guys like him built the Black Country.”

Mr Price was born in Shropshire in 1884 and moved to Halesowen at the age of 17. He worked at Stewarts & Lloyds Steel Works, where he spent the rest of his working life.



Veteran cyclist Hugh Porter MBE, Mayor Councillor Steve Waltho and Mick Whitehouse unveil the plaque

Busy YMCA had to turn teens away

VULNERABLE youngsters in the Black Country are being turned away by the YMCA due to a surge in applicants and a lack of volunteers.

The number of referrals at the YMCA Black Country Group’s Open Door project has shot up in the last 12 months. But a lack of volunteers to host applicants means many are having to be turned away.

The YMCA offers two services – supported lodgings and a night-stop.

Supported Lodgings, which helps teenagers aged 16 to 18 find accommodation with local households, has received 213 referrals across the region in the last 12 months from the Open Door project, compared to just 134 the previous year.

Of these, 35 people have been turned away, including five in Dudley, six each in Sandwell and Walsall, and 16 in Wolverhampton.

Referrals for the emergency night-stop service have gone up from 209 to 248, and the YMCA has had to say no to 46 teenagers who need a place to stay for one night or two.

£4m drug gang boss locked up for 17 years

A CUSTOMER service worker from Rowley Regis has been jailed for 17 years after leading a £4 million drug smuggling ring.

Shafaqat Hussain admitted leading an operation that trafficked 40 kilos of heroin into the UK from Pakistan.

The 39-year-old led a gang of seven who smuggled large quantities of the Class A drug into the West Midlands. The criminal enterprise was eventually smashed by an undercover police operation.

Hussain, of Perry Park Road, used his contacts in Pakistan to organise the operation, which saw heroin smuggled in through various different UK ports, with the drug hidden inside everyday items such as children’s clothing.

Detectives became suspicious in August 2012 when accomplice Sakander Riaz was arrested in connection with another matter.

Information obtained in that inquiry sparked a huge covert policing operation that led to the interception of millions of pounds worth of heroin at Bordesley Green in Birmingham and at ports around the UK.

Officers from the Serious Organised Crime Unit and the National Crime Agency were led to the gang.

Import

Working alongside Hussain were floor layer Sakander Riaz, 34, of Belchers Lane, Bordesley Green; unemployed Jason Tremayne, 45, of Latelov Road, Kitts Green; unemployed Andrew Yaqub, 44, of Latelov Road, Kitts Green; brothers and shopkeepers Usman Farooq, 23, and Umar Farooq, 31, both of Latelov Road, Kitts Green; as well as unemployed Harji Varsani, 54 of no fixed address.

After admitting conspiring to import heroin, Hussain was jailed for 17 years with the rest of his gang also facing prison sentences.

Riaz also pleaded guilty to conspiring to import heroin and was jailed for 13-and-a-half years, while Tremayne was found guilty of conspiring to import heroin and was sentenced to seven years prison.

Yaqub admitted allowing his premises to be used in connection with drug trafficking offences and was jailed for 18 months.

Varsani was sentenced to a five-year jail term after he was found guilty of conspiring to import heroin.

The Farooq brothers have both admitted conspiring to import heroin and will be sentenced in May.

Afterwards, Detective Chief Inspector Phil Cape said: “Their crimes spanned continents and our response required the deployment of sophisticated investigative techniques. As a result, drugs destined for the streets of the West Midlands and worth £4m have been taken out of circulation.”

Detectives will now set about recovering money illegally gained by the men.



Shafaqat Hussain

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Donny’s celebration gig

MULTI-MILLION-SELLING 1970s pop idol Donny Osmond will be celebrating 50 years in show business with a concert at a Birmingham venue next year.

Tickets go on sale tomorrow (Friday) for the Pummy Love star’s 2017 tour, The Soundtrack Of My Life, named after his most recent and 60th album, including a gig at the Genting Arena on February 3.

Pet Shop Boys' 13th is just Super

ALBUMS

by Leon Burakowski

NO pipes and slippers for the Pet Shop Boys who, with a career dating back to the 80s, show no inclination to get off the dancefloor.

The duo's 13th album, *Super*, is an exploding glitterball of euphoric dance-pop, Ibiza tanned and rooted in the best bits of synth pop, house and rave music.

Even at its most epic and anthemic, *Super* has a wry smile on its face thanks to Neil Tennant's downbeat vocal style and sometimes sardonic lyrics to complement the relentless beats from Chris Lowe and producer Stuart Price.

Highlights include the catchy *The Pop Kids*, the playful Yello-like *Pazzol*, the appropriately entitled *Groovy* and the majestic *Inner Sanctum*.

Add *Super* to the latest New Order and Underworld albums as further evidence that the major electronic pioneers of the 80s and 90s are not only still relevant but producing some of their best music.

Judging by its chart-topping status, *Everything You've Come To Expect*, the second album from *The Last Shadow Puppets* has established Alex Turner's 'other band' as big a deal as his day job outfit the Arctic Monkeys.

Everything does tend to live up to its title, being slick and clever, sophisticated yet shot through with Sheffield steel.

However, it smacks of excess, the lavish strings drown the songs, most of which seem to be based on classic rock 'n' roll with big nods to Motown and Morricone (Ennio, the movie music maestro). It works a treat on *Miracle Aligner*, and to some degree on *The Bourne Identity* and *Aviation*.



Pet Shop Boys Chris Lowe and Neil Tennant return with euphoric dance-pop

But too many of these songs seem eager to feature on a Tarantino soundtrack or to audition for a Bond theme, and on *The Dream Synopsis* it all starts to get frightfully post-modern and clever-clever.

Maybe next time they should return to record in Yorkshire rather than California because smug is never a good rock look.

Now a quartet, the London-based *Telemans* build on the promise of their debut *Breakfast* with highly likeable second album, *Brilliant Sanity*. Home-spun and stripped back, time spent with *Bats For Lashes* producer Dan Carey has paid off with an album that keeps the group's natural quirkiness in check whilst continuing their dogged pursuit of the perfect hook.

Often the songs are propelled by Hiro Amamiya's tight drums and Peter Cattermoul's bass, and Jonny Sanders fills out the sound with his bubbling synth while brother Tommy takes centre stage with his guitar and vocals, that sound akin to Syd Barrett.

Of the highlights, *Glory Hallelujah* is a stadium anthem on a par with a

James or Arcade Fire classic, whilst Dusseldorf shows their pop prowess and *Drop Out*, with its Fleetwood Mac like moody riff, hints at a darker side.

There is a strong whiff of patchouli about the *Black Mountain* album IV. The Canadian outfit's first offering in over five years will delight anyone hoping for a summer spent in a West Country field supping cider whilst listening to psychedelic rock.

Imagine a potent blend of Black Sabbath, Hawkwind, Jefferson Airplane and Siouxsie and the Banshees, that's what *Black Mountain* deliver, especially on *Florian Saucer Attack*, which could become their Silver Machine.

On the subject of *Hawkwind*, the alt-rock scene's intergalactic veterans are back with a concept album based on EM Forster's prophetic sci-fi story *The Machine Stops*, when in 1909 he foresaw people living in isolated subterranean cells communicating via a personal screen. Tracks like *The Machine* and *King of the World* prove they can still crank out a powerful riff, and Dave Brock has a melodic riff demonstrated by *Synchronised Blue*.

Gay football team aim to kick down barriers

THE first gay and transgender football team in the Black Country is aiming to kick discrimination out of the game when they join the Wolverhampton Sunday League.

Newly-formed Black Country Fusion FC, managed by Andy Corfield, have started training and are set to take on other gay and transgender teams from up and down the country in friendly clashes ahead of the 2016/17 season in the Beacon League.

Lesbian players also train with the team, and Sky Stewart, co-chairman of the team, is hoping Fusion can break down barriers and prove successful on the pitch.

Chance

Sky said: "I think there is a gap in the market, there are a lot of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people who want to get into the game but feel like they can't because they'll be discriminated against."

"We want to give them the chance to play football in a safe environment with other people who won't judge them."

"We're going into the Beacon League in Wolverhampton on Sundays for the 2016-17 season, it'll be the first time a gay or transgender team has played in the league in Wolverhampton."

"The whole team isn't gay or transgender," Sky added. "We do have heterosexual players as well. The idea is to try to include everyone and break down barriers."

"The manager is openly gay, I'm openly transgender. Football should be about community, and that's what we're trying to achieve."

Growing up, Sky found it tough to get into the typically macho world of football. But now the Castlecroft



Fusion with their logo, George Davies, front, with Kev Shafti, Ben Davies, Dale Skitt, Kev Turner, David Horton-Williams and Domonic Latham

Rangers and Wolves supporters hopes the new team helps the game become more accessible to people the gay and trans community.

Sky said: "A lot of it is about body, getting changed in front of men and that kind of thing might make people uncomfortable."

"We want to make a stand, we want to say to people 'we're here'. 'We've got about six pre-season friendlies organised. We've got a team from Manchester coming down and another one from Liverpool, so some big teams."

"We've got about 10 players at the moment, so ideally we need another 10. I've got high expectations for the season, we've got some high class players."

Wolverhampton health insurance agency Paycare have offered sponsorship to the team, and will provide new home and away kits and equipment.

Anyone interested in joining the team can head along to training at the 3G pitch at City of Wolverhampton College, Wellington Road, Bilston, or call Sky on 07710 193990.

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Museum forges ahead with heritage project



Guides Carol Davis and Tracey Forrest at the museum's Anchor Forge, where the steam hammer will operate

ALMOST £100,000 has been raised for an important piece of industrial history to be restored at the Black Country Living Museum in Dudley.

An appeal was launched for donations to fund the cost of repairs to the Black Country's last working steam hammer. Now museum staff are delighted to announce success in the campaign to get the £99,000 needed to carry out work to get the Anchor Forge steam hammer back up and running again for the first time in 25 years.

Based in the Tipton Road museum's

Cradley Forge, the steam hammer is described as one of the most important inventions of the Industrial Revolution. It enabled workers to harness the power of steam for forging iron and steel.

The hammer on display at the museum came from the Isiah Preston's ironworks in Cradley Heath, which closed in 1979.

Heat

When working, the heat from the furnace raises steam in the boiler to power the hammer which bashes the iron into the shape required.

Work is now underway to disman-

tle brickwork surrounding the large boiler to enable its condition to be assessed.

The museum's deputy chief executive of development Carolyn Sankey the museum was delighted to begin restoration work.

She said: "We are thrilled that we have been able to raise all the funds needed so that this important restoration work can take place and our Anchor Forge steam hammer can operate again, for the first time in 25 years."

Some of the funding has come from Arts Council England, the Idlewild Trust and The Saintbury Trust.

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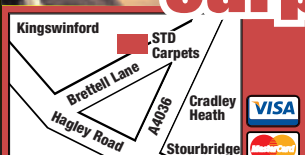
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Grab your spade for an outdoor workout

As National Gardening Week focuses on how to Get Fit In The Garden, Hannah Stephenson talks to top garden designer Bunny Guinness about how to burn calories and stay healthy through horticulture

WHILE so many of us pound away in the gym in our efforts to keep fit, burn calories and lose a few pounds, remember there is a great outdoor arena in your garden which can help you do just that.

Someone weighing around nine stone will burn 150 calories in half an hour of digging, while non-motorised mowing typically burns around 165 calories per 30 minutes, according to research from Harvard Medical School.

Raking the lawn for 30 minutes burns around 120 calories – the same as the calories burned in a half hour of Tai Chi, volleyball and even horseback riding – while half an hour of splitting wood burns the same amount of calories as half an hour of vigorous weight-lifting, research suggests.

Try squatting when you're weeding or planting and you'll use a mass of muscles in the process.

Stand on one leg while pruning, digging or clipping, which will stretch you and increase suppleness. Don't always get out the ladder. Instead, get on your toes on one leg if possible and stretch to reach.

Bunny Guinness, award-winning garden designer and co-author of the book Garden Your Way To Health And Fitness, will be supporting National Gardening Week this year.

She says: "The wonderful thing about gardening is that, unlike repetitive exercises at the gym, it can provide all over-body fitness – raking, weeding, digging and other gardening tasks all use different muscles and test your body in different ways."

Calories

Guinness, who was diagnosed with a slipped disc aged 11, but has worked on her core over the years with the help of foam rollers and back strengthening exercise, continues: "People don't realise how many calories exercise in the garden uses up.

"If I went to a gym and did a good workout – 20 minutes on a rowing machine, 20 minutes on a running machine and 20 minutes on a cross trainer – or spent three hours in the garden mowing the lawn, weeding and pruning, I'd use up the same amount of calories."

Warm-ups are important, especially if you've been a couch potato over the winter months, she stresses.

"It's best to limit your activity on one thing, so rotate your garden jobs – don't spend hours digging a border all at once – and, most importantly, stretch, which makes a huge difference to me. If I don't stretch at the end of the day when I'm warm, I really stiffen up afterwards."

People with a small garden who are going to find it hard to do enough aerobic exercise can use up energy doing step-ups on their existing steps or a wooden bench, she suggests.

Monkey bars

"You are not going to be carting wheelbarrows for miles, so it's good to mix it up with other things. You can do bench presses and other exercises on a simple garden bench. Some people have monkey bars for upper body exercise.

"If you are raking – which is like a lunge – try to use your other side. We tend to use just one side of our bodies, but you will get used to using the other side too."

Classic back problems associated with gardening can be avoided if you make your core muscles as strong as they can be, she says.

"When you are lifting a heavy pot, squat down and use your core muscles to lift it up, pulling it close to your tummy and then stand. You really don't want to be twisting and having the weight out from your body. Foam rollers are brilliant to help you realise where your core muscles are."

If you want to be super fit, combine gardening with a more traditional work-out and avoid shortcuts like ride-on lawnmowers, leaf-blowers and other tools which avoid having to pick things off the ground.

The four RHS Gardens will be leading the campaign, which runs until Sunday, with other gardens across the UK encouraged to take part.

For more information, visit www.nationalgardeningweek.org.uk



Magnolia tree blossom varies in size and colour depending on variety

Glorious blooms carry wonderful scents too

BEST OF THE BUNCH

– Magnolia

THESE glorious flowering trees and shrubs whose blooms range from goblet-sized deep red purples to starry whites can be used effectively as stand-alone specimens and in borders, depending on the type you choose.

Magnolia liliiflora 'Nigra', for instance, is an ideal compact tree which could make a focal point in a small garden, bearing goblet-shaped deep red-pink flowers in late spring.

Magnolia stellata, the star magnolia, is the smallest spring-flowering type and one of the most popular, named for its white star-shaped blooms. M. x soulangeana produces tulip-shaped bluish white flowers, flushed purple-pink at the base.

The evergreen magnolia M. grandiflora grows to 3m x 1.8m, producing large creamy white lemon-scented flowers in summer. Magnolias prefer neutral to acid soil and the deciduous varieties love clay.

The deciduous types flower in spring, so frost can damage their blooms, and the smaller-flowered types are more weather resistant.

GOOD ENOUGH TO EAT

– Sowing cucumbers under glass

ALTHOUGH you can buy cucumbers all year round, the feeling of achievement you get when you grow your own make it worth having a go and you only need a couple of plants to give you a constant supply in summer.

They're delicious in salads or added to sauces with fish or in salsas and other dips.

Cucumbers do take up a lot of room in the greenhouse, so bear that in mind when sowing. Sow singly in 8cm (3in) pots in a heated propagator in early spring for growing on in a heated greenhouse, or later in spring if your greenhouse is unheated.

Pot them on to larger pots to allow them to establish further before planting them in the soil borders of your greenhouse in June, in 30cm pots or two to a growing bag. Keep them out of draughts and water well especially when cropping, but don't allow the soil to become waterlogged. Bamboo canes will be needed to support them and you should remove sideshoots from the bottom 60cm of the plant, allowing higher ones to develop.

Playing a supporting role as garden grows

ROSS UNDERWOOD

Head Gardener at Hodnet Hall



IN LIKE a lion and out like a lamb is often the way I hear April described.

The days can be unexpectedly warm but it is still a month when we can expect cold nights and even frost so it is worth keeping an eye on the garden. It is also a great time to do some preparation so that the garden is as ready as it can be and you have time to enjoy it.

If you have had your sweet peas under glass then you should keep them there and keep pinching to stop them getting leggy but is a good idea to get your supports in place to save time later.

We grow hundreds of plants for cutting in the summer and it would be a waste of time to make wigwams from canes or hazel sticks so we use a large frame covered in pig netting through which the plants will scramble.

If you are putting them in the border try using twiggly material which looks more natural in the garden.

Cannas and dahlias will be sprouting which means that it is an excellent time to take cuttings from the latter.

Don't be too greedy and only take two or three from each tuber.

These can be rooted with a little rooting powder and put in pots of well drained cutting compost and covered by plastic or put in a frame where they can be kept turgid until they root.

In time they will form their own tubers.

Slugs

It is a good time to take basal cuttings from many plants.

Delphiniums can be short lived on my heavy soil or fall prey to slugs and snails so a few cuttings taken now will future proof you against catastrophe.

Another plant that will benefit from some timely support are herbaceous peonies.

We grow hybrids of P. lactiflora.

Their red spears are pushing up from the earth right now and in a short time the leaves will unfurl.

We grow peonies in two situations.

Firstly, in formal rows where there are primarily for cutting and secondly as border plants.

Where they are grown for cutting they are supported with a ring of garden canes around each plant.

These are then bound with gain string to stop the plant from flopping and so we can reach down and cut the stems as low as possible.

Where they are grown in the garden they are grown together in a border to themselves.

We put canes all around the bed and stretch green plastic garden netting over them.



Pieris in flower – the plants are at their best right now and April is the perfect time to be out and about



Sweet peas keeping warm until it's safe to plant them out

We use the type with large squares so the plants have plenty of room.

Whatever you do never ever put your cane through the crowns!

April is one of the best times to be out and about.

The soil is warming up and life is springing everywhere.

The low sunlight and long shadows accentuate structural elements within the garden and as the sun is not high or strong enough to bleach them, the colours of flowering trees and shrubs have a special vibrancy.

The sight of virginal white cherry blossoms

again a background of verdant green is one that I find especially uplifting.

One of my favourite is the single white flowered species cherry, Prunus sogdiana.

This extremely rare tree in cultivation comes from Central Asia and has abundant flowers followed by large fruit which ripens from yellow to red.

Beautiful

For those with an eye to see them members of the Acer family, including Acer rubrum, A. cappadocicum and A. pseudo-platanus (the Sycamore) are in flower now.



Supports for peonies as growth gets under way

These are beautiful when seen close up in red or lime green and I would encourage you to do so. There are many Pieris and Rhododendrons giving their best right now and the show will only get better and better.

Rhododendron praecox is always early, the suffix 'praecox' meaning 'the first'.

It's lilac purple flowers open along bare branches in the sunshine and do not get spoilt by frost.

There is plenty to do now but also plenty to enjoy so never mind those April showers.

Dreamland

40th Anniversary Celebration SALE

The family business was founded in 1976 by Mike Brown, who is such a familiar face in the Local Community that he is known as "Mike the Bed". The team of experienced staff is headed by manageress Carol Stock, who has been part of the Dreamland family since the beginning.

Dreamland has been helping people across the Midlands to get a good night's sleep for "40" years and to celebrate the anniversary, will be giving extra discounts on all beds to say thank you to customers for their support over the years.

Located in Mill Street, Brierley Hill - just a few minutes walk from the Merry Hill Centre - you'll find friendly and knowledgeable staff, all of whom understand the importance of getting the right bed for you. You'll receive impartial advice and a tailor-made solution to meet your needs from the fitter to softer beds upon which to rest your head.

The impressive range of beds includes memory foam and orthopaedic mattresses, beds with storage, pine and metal frames and beds especially for children. This is backed up by a large warehouse containing hundreds of beds and mattresses, meaning that your chosen product can be delivered as swiftly as required. Everything possible is done to make customers' lives easier, for instance, there's plenty of room to park at the rear of the store and Dreamland delivers all over the West Midlands.

Public demand for Dreamland's superlative customer service and premium products has seen the business expand four times in as many decades. Now, with the most extensive range they've ever had, means all styles and budgets are catered for; it's no surprise that there have been thousands of satisfied customers. Founded by Mike Brown, Dreamland is a family business that is proud to serve the Black Country and the wider Midlands region. Mike says: "We're very excited to have reached this milestone of 40 years and we're looking forward to continuing to serve our customers, old and new, for the next 40 and beyond."

We spend a third of our lives asleep, so there can be no better investment than a quality hand-made mattress and bed.

We pride ourselves on supplying only the best quality and we know that each handmade bed we sell provides pressure relief, comfort and support exactly where your body needs it."

Dreamland has come a long way since it first opened its doors in Mill Street, Brierley Hill, in the spring of 1976 with just 12 beds on show, it has now become renowned for quality and service. Dreamland stocks only manufacturers that are approved by the National Bed Federation and offers premium handmade beds, with mattresses filled with natural fillings such as wool, cashmere, alpaca and silk, help

to regulate your body temperature. But, whatever you choose, you'll be delighted at Dreamland's very competitive prices.

There are more than 100 bed models in stock at Dreamland, including Somnos, Relyon, Dunlopillo and Hypnos and you'll also find other leading brands such as Sealy, Myers, Silent Night, Mammoth and electric bed specialists Mi beds.

Instead of a delivery charge, customers are asked to make a donation, all of which goes to charity. Over the past few years, it has raised more than £125,000 for the Mary Stevens Hospice, thanks to the generosity of customers who give in lieu of delivery charge.

Dreamland will even collect your old bed and assemble your divan, more reasons why you'll sleep soundly in your new bed! Not surprisingly, Dreamland attracts

much of its business through word of mouth and recommendations.

Because they have been around for such a long time, people know they can rely on us. If you're looking to replace your tired old bed with a new model, look no further - Dreamland Bedding Centre, with its large free customer car park, is open seven days a week.

Opening times are Monday to Saturday 9am-5.30pm; Sundays 11am-4.30pm. Visit Dreamland Bedding Centre today at 23 Mill Street, Brierley Hill or telephone 01384 74166.

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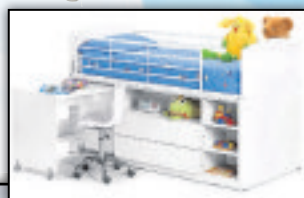


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First-time buyers need 13 years to save deposit

THE average value of a UK home hit a record high of £292,000 in January after increasing by 7.9 per cent annually, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

Meanwhile, property website Rightmove has reported that the average price tag on a property coming to market across England and Wales has passed the £300,000 mark for the first time.

The struggle for people to get on the housing ladder has also been laid bare.

The ONS figures also show that a first-time buyer faces paying 7.7 per cent more for a property in the UK than they did a year earlier, with the average price paid for a starter home standing at £222,000 in January.

And another report, from estate agent Hamptons International, found it would take a single first-time buyer 13-and-a-half years to build a big enough deposit for a home, while couples face a wait of three-and-a-half years.

That report, which covered England and Wales, assumed someone would need to raise a 15 per cent deposit to buy a home.

It also assumed aspiring buyers were working full-time and saving 22 per cent of their income towards a deposit after paying essential bills.

So with the UK housing market already on full steam ahead for 2016, what's next in the coming months?

Well, one of the reasons behind the strong activity seen so far in 2016 is thought to be a stamp duty increase for people buying second homes, such as buy-to-let investors, in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The increase has just kicked in, as of April 1, so its full effects are yet to be seen.

The three percentage point increase on previous stamp duty rates for this sector of the market was announced by the UK Government towards the end of 2015.

There have also been signs of investors rushing to complete sales before the

deadline.

In Scotland, stamp duty land tax (SDLT) has been replaced by the land and buildings transaction tax (LBTT).

However, similar tax hikes on the purchase of additional homes such as second homes or buy-to-let properties have also been introduced in Scotland, as of April 1.

The intention is to avoid any potential distortions in Scotland that could arise from the stamp duty increase across the rest of the UK.

Various suggestions have been put forward as to the impact the tax hikes might have on the market.

Some experts believe the extra costs will be passed on by landlords to rental sector tenants in the form of higher rents.

A report from the Association of Residential Letting Agents (ARLA) found that nearly two thirds (63 per cent) of letting agents predict the supply of buy-to-let properties will now start to fall as landlords are pushed out of the market. Nearly six in 10 (57 per cent) believe rents will be pushed up.

But the coming months could also present an opportunity for first-time buyers who can find themselves competing for the same property types that investors also go for.

Simon Rubinsohn, chief economist at the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), says the pace of house growth could start to 'slacken' if demand from buy-to-let investors shrinks a bit in the coming months.

He says there have been signs of buy-to-let investors and people buying holiday homes looking to accelerate their plans.

This means some sales that may otherwise have taken place later in the year have now been brought forward.

However, an array of schemes designed to help people move onto or up the housing ladder may fill any gaps left by a drift off in demand from investors.

Mr Rubinsohn, who is responsible for overseeing thought leadership within the organisation, says with various Government schemes such as Help to Buy upping the demand from buyers, it is hard to predict the impact of the stamp duty hike.

He said: "We're going to see sales activity continue to move ahead but it's going to be a bit harder to build up the numbers. First-time buyers may find the landscape a bit more favourable."



No need to be floored by endless flooring options

By Sam Wylie-Harris

CHOOSING new flooring can be daunting, especially when you consider the groundwork that goes into crafting the perfect floor plan.

Along with being practical, your flooring choice needs to suit your space and style – and there's a wide array of contemporary design options, whether you opt for tiles, mosaics, stone, wood or carpet.

All you have to do is step up and choose the right one for you:

ON THE TILES

"A hallway is used day in, day out, as a high footfall area, so hard-wearing materials work brilliantly," says Sian O'Neill, head of marketing at Topps Tiles.

"For a contemporary look, modular patterns are a key trend, with geometric shapes laid in a linear format."

Flooring in pale, soft shades will help create a bright, airy entrance. A good tip is to use grey grout, instead of conventional white, as it gives a modern look and stays looking fresh, even after lots of impact with muddy boots or wet paws!

In living rooms, the trend for indoor/outdoor living is huge, and growing in popularity. "The key to achieving this style of living space is keeping it seamless, to create one complete, unified living area," says O'Neill.

"Laying the same flooring through to your patio will extend your living room, bringing the indoors outside and creating an even bigger space."

This look is perfect for any home, large or compact, and can completely change the way you view the spaces you live in. Hexagons and geometric patterns on tiles tick all the current interior trends, and are perfect for use throughout.

"Based on the striking patchworks and patterns of Mediterranean decor, Moroccan tile designs are a popular and refreshing option when it comes to tiling a floor space," notes Callum Chester, spokesperson for Walls And Floors. "They create a statement focal point that instantly injects charm and character into any room."

And don't forget, linear tiles and geometric shapes can be introduced to the bathroom, to accent bathroom furniture.

□ Stabledoor Modular Tile, £21.99 per box (0.54 square metre), Topps Tiles (www.toppstiles.co.uk)

□ Spaces Bruges Indoor Grey Tile, £45.03 per square metre, and Outdoor Grey Tile, £60.03 per square metre, Topps Tiles (www.toppstiles.co.uk)

□ Beige Mix Tiles, Kutlu, from £14.95 per square metre, Walls And Floors (www.wallsandfloors.co.uk)

□ Hexagon Carbon Infusion Polished Tile, £91.81 per square metre, Topps Tiles (www.toppstiles.co.uk)

STONE ME

For a modern feel in a neutral scheme, natural stone floors are always desirable, especially when they're highly polished to reflect light. This gives the illusion of more space and can be enriched by metal bar stools in a kitchen, or a free standing bath with traditional cast iron feet in bathrooms.

"Porcelain and stone flooring continue to be popular choices, as they offer both durability and a luxurious finish," says Prity Rana, marketing manager at Marshalls Tile And Stone Interiors. "The many finishes and colours mean there are options to complement any style of home or taste."

Remember though: natural stone does require regular cleaning and specialist treatment to keep it in top condition, while hard-wearing porcelain and stone-effect tiles can withstand the daily trials of family living, and provide a forgiving backdrop without being as high-maintenance – worth considering in a well-used room.

□ Icon Oyster (porcelain), from £75 per square metre, Marshalls (for stockists: www.marshalls.co.uk; 0345 308 3030)

□ Venetian Jasmin (stone), from £68.79 per square metre, Marshalls (for stockists: www.marshalls.co.uk; 0345 308 3030)

□ Callan Brick Tile (stone effect), £44.81 per square metre, Topps Tiles (www.toppstiles.co.uk)

OAK AGED

Timeless in the style stakes, natural flooring materials like oak also contrast well with marble worktops, wooden cabinets and butcher's blocks, to style up your culinary space. The amount of time we spend in the



Icon Oyster (porcelain), from £75 per square metre, available from Marshalls.co.uk



Hexagon Carbon Infusion Polished Tile £91.81 per square metre, available from Toppstiles.co.uk



Callan Brick Tile, stone effect, £44.81 per square metre, available from Toppstiles.co.uk

kitchen makes it a worthy investment, too.

"Oak flooring has become increasingly popular with consumers embracing the simplicity and natural beauty of rustic oak," says Mike Richardson, managing director at Kersaint Cobb. "Introducing colours and soft tones, through greys and pale whites, adds a modern twist to classic materials, and the vintage feel continues to remain a popular trend."

"Dark woods are ideal for traditional schemes, adding warmth and depth to a room."

If you're on a budget but love the aged oak look, laminate flooring is a cost effective alternative to the real thing, along with being durable and hard-wearing.

"Most ranges incorporate authentic wood grains, which are perfectly reflected into the floor's joints, creating a natural look and making laminate an ideal choice if real wood flooring isn't an option," says Heather Taylor, floor coverings buyer at John Lewis.

"With an extensive array of colour choices, laminate can complement so many existing kitchen schemes, meaning a simple update of the floor can completely reinvigorate the space."

□ Rustic Timeless Oak SO22 from the Simply Oak Wood Flooring range, £42 per square metre, Kersaint Cobb (www.kersaintcobb.co.uk)

□ Sensa Solido Elite Collection (Nashville 28439), £29.94 per square metre pack, John Lewis (www.johnlewis.com)

□ Bleached Maple Tiles, from the selection of Jannah Wood Effect Tiles, £26.95 per square metre, Walls and Floors (www.wallsandfloors.co.uk)

CUE THE CARPET

Neutrals, throw rugs and bold stripes are great for laying in the living room and with the growing trend for introducing pattern on the floor, you can really go to town with designs and textures.

"Whether it's bolder chevron patterns or more subtle stripes, introducing pattern can instantly change the shape and feel of a room," says Emma Hopkins, marketing manager at Crucial Trading.

"Colourful stripes are great for elongating and widening an area, creating an illusion of a larger space, and lighter shades are perfect for brightening cramped spaces by reflecting the light – this makes them just

as adaptable for living rooms as they are for hallways, stairs and studies."

Kersaint Cobb's Richardson agrees: "We're seeing the return of striped carpets as a popular choice for the home. Stripes are great for widening or lengthening a room, adding that extra dimension that some spaces are lacking. Using striped carpet is also an easy way to make the floor a focal point of a room."

For the best of both worlds, those with wooden flooring can look to layer and experiment with texture.

"Rugs are easy updates and ideal for the design-savvy, looking to change the feel of the room and keep up to date with trends," says Claire Jeffrey, floor coverings and rug buyer, John Lewis. "Neutral lighter shades, such as greys, blues and off-whites, are particularly effective for opening up smaller spaces."

□ Biscayne Lemon 100% Wool, £73 per square metre, Crucial Trading (www.crucial-trading.com)

□ 100% Wool Caribbean Days – Nevis, £36.50 per square metre, Kersaint Cobb (www.kersaintcobb.co.uk)

Official Royal opening success with HRH the Duke of Gloucester



We are delighted to announce that our new £6m state-of-the-art rehoming centre in Catherine-de-Barnes, Solihull was officially opened by HRH the Duke of Gloucester on Wednesday April 13, 2016.

Staff welcomed the Duke to our impressive new welfare centre and gave him the same warm welcome that our supporters receive each day. He was very interested in finding out about how our charity helps the thousands of stray dogs that come into our homes each year, and took a tour of the centre meeting staff, talking about their duties, interacting with dogs whilst they were relaxing in their kennels and even got up close and personal with Ruben and Jasper, two greyhounds that are still looking for their forever homes.

He then moved on to our "buy a brick" wall which has helped towards the cost of the new centre, and was touched by all the messages that our supporters have left for family members, friends, and their beloved pets.

Following the tour, the Duke then made his way to our Education and Community Centre where our new Chairman, John Wheatley, thanked

him for visiting the site and for officially commemorating the event by unveiling a plaque. He continued by thanking our long standing supporters for their help, as without such support from donors, fundraisers and "Friends" alike, this day just wouldn't have been possible.

The visit ended with the Duke making a speech in which he thanked BDH for his invitation and to all staff for their tremendous work that goes into caring for each and every dog. The home was then officially opened with the Duke unveiling a plaque which will stand proudly in our reception.

We would just like to thank His Royal Highness, The High Sheriff of the West Midlands, The Major of Solihull, The Major of Birmingham and The Earl of Aylesford for attending.

A special thanks also goes to our amazing supporters - We are only able to provide our homeless dogs with these amazing new facilities because of YOUR support and YOUR hard work. Without you, we simply wouldn't be able to continue caring for all the stray and unwanted dogs that come into our care each year so on behalf of all our staff and dogs, THANK YOU!



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The latest brewery to open to the public is De Koninck



Brew-tiful – the famous Stella Artois Brewery



Light up your life – a view of Antwerp at night

Beer we go with tour of famous breweries

I'M about to sample my first beer of the day and it's not even lunch-time.

Drinking alcohol in the morning is usually frowned upon but I have an excuse, having just completed a tour of Palm Breweries in Belgium.

The country may be famous for its chocolates but it appears to be just as enthusiastic about its beer, and a number of breweries offer tourists the chance to see how Belgium's famous ales are made.

Palm Breweries in Steenhuffel is a short drive from the city of Antwerp and produces a dozen different types of beer, including the US favourite Rodenbach and a red fruit ale called Rosso.

"Brewing beer is chemistry," the tour guide says as we roam around a production line, before taking a seat at the bar to see the end results.

While arguably Belgium's most famous beer export, Stella Artois is considered a strong lager in the UK, but most of its rivals in Belgium have an alcohol content above five per cent.

After sinking my third variety of Palm beer, I take a taxi to the city of Mechelen to meet local beer expert Sofie Vanraefelghem. Sofie is a zythologist who has studied the history of beer-making, and holds events to show how different kinds of ales can complement certain foods.

She also founded the Women and Beer movement to tackle people's preconceptions about the drink.

"My whole life revolves around beer," she says at her Women and Beer workshop. Beer is surrounded by lots of prejudices, like beer is fattening. Not true. Beer's not healthy. Not true. Women wouldn't drink beer with me, so I thought, 'How can I change that?'"

Sofie claims that regular beer drinkers have a 'really good bone structure' and a 25cl glass of Pilsner has fewer than 110 calories. Researchers have also discovered people who drink beer live longer," she adds.

This is music to my ears. However, she is keen to point out that drinking Belgium's strong beers should be done in moderation.

One of the more unusual places visitors

HOLIDAYS

By David Mercer

can enjoy a beer is at the top of St Rumbold's Tower, part of the cathedral in Mechelen. At 97 metres high, and more than 500 steps to the top, it's a workout to reach the summit of the Unesco world heritage site, but the effort is well worth it for the excellent and almost endless views of Mechelen and northern Belgium.

The company behind one of the country's most popular beers, Duvel, has also opened its doors to visitors for a behind-the-scenes tour of its brewery in the rural town of Puurs, based just outside of Antwerp. Its most popular beer, with an alcohol strength of 8.5 per cent, is served in a glass called a bolleke.

Cheese

The tour is popular among men and women, with one hen party clearly enjoying the opportunity to sample some of Duvel's products.

Everyone is well behaved though, and visitors are treated to cheese and beer at the end of the tour.

The latest brewery to open up to the public is De Koninck in Antwerp. Its interactive tour includes a simulated van drive through the city and an amusing bar scene where the brewery's past owners bicker among themselves as they explain the company's history.

For those needing to soak up some of that beer, Graanmarkt 13 Restaurant in Antwerp offers creative dishes from chef Seppe Nobels, one of the Flemish Kitchen Rebels.

The Rebels are 25 top chefs who are all under the age of 35 and have a passion for Flemish gastronomy and innovative food. Many of the restaurant's dishes are made with vegetables grown in its very own garden.

While Brussels and Bruges are already popular Belgian destinations, Antwerp, Mechelen and its many breweries are perfect for any beer lover.



You can even enjoy a beer at the top of St Rumbold's tower in Mechelen

Archaeology team to dig into history of Clent Hills

NATIONAL Trust and Wolverhampton Archaeology Group are teaming up to discover more about the history of the Clent Hills.

Every Sunday from May 1 until June 26 a team of archaeologists will be investigating the site and exploring unusual landscape features to get a better understanding of how they were made.

The main focus of the work will be on the ruins of Hill Cottage, sometimes referred to as the Ranger's Cottage, which is in the valley behind the Four Stones.

The cottage was once a destination in its own right, selling teas to the many day-trippers that flocked to the Hills during the first half of the twentieth century.

The National Trust thinks that this cottage was built at some point in the late 1700s, but there is evidence to suggest that people lived on that site as far back as the Early Medieval Period.

Visitors on those Sundays will be able to visit the dig site, talk to the archaeologists, handle some finds and have a chance to be an archaeologist themselves.

There are a vast network of walking trails to enjoy around the Clent Hills, including part of the North Worcestershire Way. Dogs are also welcome at the Clent Hills and there is a picnic area at Nimmings Wood car park and a café at Nimmings Wood car park but is closed on Mondays. A walks leaflet is available from the café and at the entrance to Nimmings Wood car park.

Simon Barker, National Trust Wildlife and Countryside Consultant, said: "The outdoor spaces at the places we care for are just as important as the buildings and interiors.

"They offer a variety of habitats for native wildlife and plants and we actively manage many of these areas to benefit the flora and fauna that live there. For example, at Clent Hills we maintain the woodlands and restore areas of open acid grassland so that it continues to attract a variety of birdlife.

As well as resident species and regular summer visitors, the hilltops of Clent are good places to see rarer migrant species such as Ring Ouzel (aka the mountain blackbird) and Wheatear as they stop off on these high points en route to their breeding sites."

For more information about the history days contact clenthills@nationaltrust.org.uk or call Laura Smart, Visitor Experience Manager, on 01562 712 822.

Entries rolling in for Festival of Transport

ENTRIES have been rolling in for a transport show which will feature a range of modern and classic vehicles.

More than 60 vehicles have already been booked to go on display at the second Market Drayton Festival of Transport.

It will be held on Palethorpes' site in the town on August 21, from 10am until 4pm.

Organiser Nathan Shore said: "There will be all sorts of vehicles; modern, classic and vintage.

"There will be cars, tractors, trucks, bikes – basically anything with a wheel.

"We have had a good response of people entering their vehicles with over 60 cars booked for 2016 already and entries are still piling in.

"There will be local caterers with a selection of different foods, from Mexican food to hot dogs and ice cream.

"We have loads of entertainment for the kids, with puppet shows and a fairground as well as trade stalls."

Last year's inaugural event raised £5,000 for Ward 23 for haematology and oncology at the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital to purchase pulse oximeters.

Mr Shore said: "Money raised this year will once again be donated to Ward 23. We are aiming to buy equipment like last year so we can see what our efforts and people's generosity goes towards.

"We are not sure on the equipment as we are still in talks with the ward manager."

He added: "The idea for the event came about because my dad, Wesley Shore, used to have a 1953 vintage truck. He would take it to different shows and loved seeing all the other older vehicles. Just before he passed away three years ago he was cared for on Ward 23 at the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital. We wanted to help raise some money for the ward."

More than 600 people flocked to last year's festival.

For more details about this year's event email md-festival@outlook.com or visit the event's Facebook page.

Masterchef quality served up at an 18th century manor



The Manor has been tipped for a Michelin star

HAVING been a follower of Masterchef: The Professionals since it started in 2008 I began to watch the 2015 series with my usual degree of interest.

I was immediately impressed with Mark Stinchcombe, so much so that I Googled his name.

I found that he and his wife were a duo of head chefs at Eckington Manor.

Of course, his performance has made the restaurant a very popular destination, and therefore a little difficult to get in, especially at weekend.

The Manor, until 2004, was a run-down farm, bought and restored by Judy Gardner who set up a cookery school.

The business has grown, especially with the arrival of Mark and his then partner, Sue, who is now Mrs Stinch-

combe, some two years ago. There's an attractive bar area, where pre-dinner drinks came accompanied by a truffled cream-cheese dip, before we were shown to the upstairs restaurant.

An interesting amuse-bouché of celeriac, with raisin and Brie, was served with cheese focaccia and fennel bread.

We both had the confit guinea-fowl terrine, with turnip, golden raisin and mustard seeds. This was a delicate balance of textures and tastes.

My main course of Eckington Manor rib-eye of beef and braised shin, with caramelised onion, wild mushrooms and red wine jus was a beautifully constructed dish. My wife's seabass, braised fennel, prawn tortellini and roasted lemon, which was the undoubted star on

the plate, was a great delight. We both settled on the rhubarb soufflé, gingerbread ice-cream and rhubarb juice for our desserts. The lightness of the soufflé and the sharpness of the rhubarb juice, contrasting with the richness of the ice-cream, made a very satisfactory finale to a dinner of exceptional quality.

The food and drinks bill was about £150, which may be good value for the Eckington Manor experience, especially as many diners are tipping the restaurant for Michelin star recognition.

Our room, though small, had a comfortable bed and an en-suite with walk-in shower. There was also an array of toiletries. Breakfasts, made from high-quality, locally produced ingredients, were first class.

By JERALD SMITH

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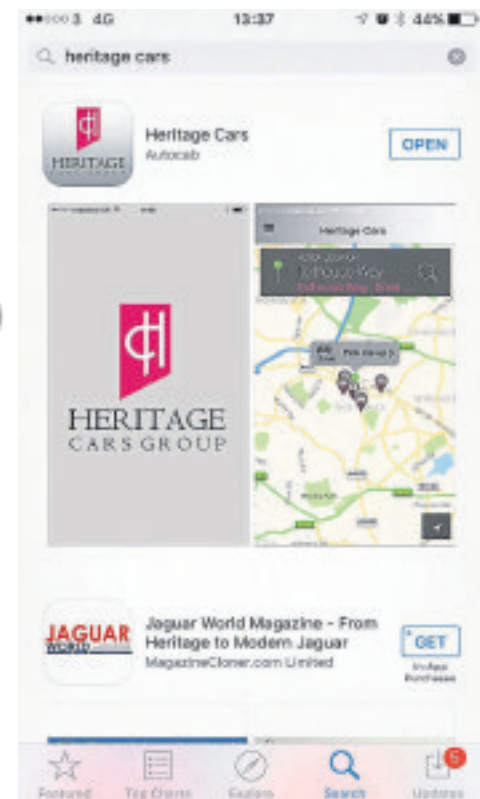
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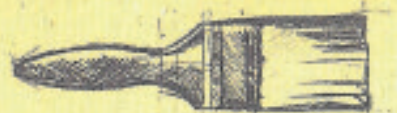
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A Lott to live up to in iconic role

REVIEW

By Mark Shipp

Breakfast At Tiffany's,
New Alexandra Theatre,
Birmingham

FANS will be keen to see pop star Pixie Lott in this stage adaptation of Truman Capote's novella.

But it's hard to get away from seeing the demure Audrey Hepburn in the iconic leading role.

True, Lott herself says she couldn't even try to emulate the screen legend's portrayal of Holly Golightly. And this production, adapted for the stage by Richard Greenberg, stays closer to the original novella than the 1961 movie.

It follows the plotline closely. Golightly is a socialite that everyone is infatuated with, not least her neighbour 'Fred' and Japanese photographer Mr Yunioshi. But she only has eyes for the expensive – and harbours a secret other life.

Revealed

From our vantage point it wasn't always possible to hear what was being said and the first half was slow going as the characters were introduced.

However, a faster-paced second half leads to an unravelling of the story. Golightly's double life is revealed and her troubles don't end there.

But it all builds up into a memorable climax in the New York rain as she gives up her plans to be with her would-be suitor Fred, played brilliantly by Matt Barber.

Lott cannot be questioned for her stage presence and her enthusiastic performance, but, for me, she lacks the charisma and enigma that the late, great Hepburn brought to the big



Pixie Lott as Holly Golightly

screen role. We know the 25-year-old former Strictly contestant can sing – as three number one hits testify – and her voice is faultless, most notably her rendition of Moon River, which merited well-earned applause.

The Curve production also stars Robert Calvert, Naomi Cranston, Charlie De Melo, Andrew Joshi, Melanie la Barrie, Sevan Stephan and Andy Watkins as well as Katy Allen.



The pop star and the adorable cat

Former Bread and Goodnight Sweetheart star Victor Maguire is also among the cast as the barman Joe Bell, while audience members will most definitely fall in love with the adorable feline member of the cast.

And, thanks to a goodie bag of fragrance samples, it looked like we'd enjoyed our own breakfast at Tiffany's.

The production runs at the New Alexandra Theatre until Saturday.

It's pure gold at the end of this rainbow



Anthony (Gary Wilmot) applies Judy Garland's (Lisa Maxwell) make up before her performance

End Of The Rainbow, Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton
SO it's true, there really is gold at the end of the rainbow – in the shape of the brilliant actress and singer Lisa Maxwell.

Her portrayal of the troubled legend Judy Garland in End of the Rainbow really hit the spot. In a performance where she was on stage for probably 99 per cent of the show she never faltered, portraying the crazy and tragic life of the child star whose life was blighted by drink and drugs and a desperate desire to be loved.

Despite many husbands, she never really found anyone to love her for herself, except her gay pianist Anthony, the only one who promised to actually care for her.

It is now 47 years since she died, at the young age of 47, but Judy Garland still manages to hold people's inter-

est, as much for her personal life as for her stage and screen career. And that was obvious by the number of people crammed into the Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton, and the standing ovation Lisa received at the end.

She laid bare Judy's life, how she battled her demons, her life as a child star that led her on a downward spiral and a lifetime battle with addiction.

Not an easy role to take on but Lisa Maxwell pulls it off well. It helps that the likeness is good and she can certainly sing. And no it was not all misery. There were lots of really funny parts. Funny, but also tragic.

The songs are there, The Man that Got Away, Come Rain or Come Shine and, of course, Somewhere Over the Rainbow. She was well matched with Gary Wilmot as Anthony her gay pianist. And her husband-to-be Mickey Deans (Sam Attwater) who played her

manager. He was keen to get her back on stage to clear her debts and even ended up feeding her pills in the end to get her to perform. It was obvious that his intention was more about making a name for himself as a manager.

The set switches between the Ritz Hotel Suite and The Talk Of The Town nightclub. At the end Gary Wilmot comes on stage to update the audience of how she did eventually marry Mickey but died just weeks later.

I was not sure what to expect with this production but I came away moved and with a better understanding of what drove this star over the edge.

The run at the Grand was unfortunately only brief but you can catch it at Lichfield Garrick Theatre in May and the New Alexandra Theatre in Birmingham in June.

SUE ATTWATER

fast theticket

Let It Be-gin

Beatlemania
on the stage
See Page 23



Deadly call

Dial M For Murder –
Page 23



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Flare Path



Monday to Saturday (April 30), Birmingham Rep, B'ham
This new production of Terence Rattigan's wartime romance features Lynden Edwards and Hedydd Dylan (pictured) as old flames in a love triangle with her RAF pilot husband. Visit www.birmingham-rep.co.uk

Julian Clary: The Joy Of Mincing



Wednesday, 8pm
New Alexandra Theatre, B'ham
The comedian and novelist looks back over his 30 years of camp comedy, ranging from causing TV outrage to becoming a family panto favourite, in The Joy of Mincing tour. See www.atgtickets.com/shows

Des O'Connor



Saturday, 7.30pm
Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton
The 84-year-old showbiz legend looks back at a glittering career that has seen him work with stars including Frank Sinatra, Buddy Holly, The Beatles and, of course, Morecambe and Wise. See www.grandtheatre.co.uk

Tell Me On A Sunday



Sunday, 7.30pm
New Alexandra Theatre, B'ham
Following success in Oliver! and Camlarity Jane, the nation's favourite Lancashire lass, Jodie Prenger, is seeking love in New York in Andrew Lloyd Webber and Don Black's musical. See www.atgtickets.com/shows

POP & ROCK

Jake Sims
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Three Blind Mice
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The Red Paintings
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The Rainbow, Digbeth,
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B12 0LD.
Call 0121 753 1818

Vant
Tomorrow at 7.30pm,
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Birmingham,
B5 4EG.
Call 0121 632 6756

Amped
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Wolverhampton,
WV1 1RQ.
Call 0870 320 7000

Quill
Tomorrow at 7.30pm,
The Robin 2 Hotel, Bilston,
WV14 7LJ.
Call 01902 401211

Kings And Captains
Tomorrow at 9pm,
Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge,
DY8 3TB.
Call 01384 374410

The Straws
Wed at 7.30pm, £16.50
The Robin 2 Hotel, Bilston,
WV14 7LJ.
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Macklemore And Ryan Lewis
Tue at 7.30pm,
Barclaycard Arena, Birmingham,
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Inheaven
Wed at 7.30pm - 11pm,
Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath,
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B14 7JZ.
Call 0844 870 0000

Wayne Hussey
Tomorrow at 7.30pm,
The Rainbow, Digbeth,
Birmingham,
B12 0LD. Call 0121 753 1818

Troye Sivan
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The Institute, Digbeth,
Birmingham,
B5 6DY. Call 0121 643 0428

Ben Haenow
Thu at 7pm - 11pm,
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The James Hunter Six
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Raymond Froggatt
Sun at 7.30pm, £17
Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton,
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Broken Hands
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Blair Dunlop
Tomorrow at 7pm - 11pm,
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Patrick Monahan: The Disco Years
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Keith Barry: Brain Hacker
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Dial M For Murder
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The Beanfield
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Breakfast At Tiffany's
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Check out full listings in **the ticket** in Friday's Express & Star

Beatlemania is fab for theatre again



From Mathew Street to Hurst Street – the Cavern recreated on stage in the Let It Be show coming to the Hippodrome

BEATLEMANIA returns to Birmingham Hippodrome next week when West End and Broadway hit Let It Be rocks onto the stage – 53 years after the original Fab Four performed on the Hippodrome stage.

The band performed at the theatre twice in 1963, first in March and then in November where their 10 song set included From Me To You, All My Loving, Twist and Shout, and She Loves You.

Celebrating the music of the world's most successful band in a spectacular concert, Let It Be charts the Merseyside group's meteoric rise

from humble beginnings in Liverpool's Cavern Club, through to height of Beatlemania to their later studio masterpieces.

Seen by more than one million people worldwide, Let It Be is packed with 40-plus of The Beatles' greatest hits including A Hard Day's Night, Help!, Ticket To Ride, Yesterday, Hey Jude, Come Together, All You Need Is Love and, of course, Let It Be.

The cast of Let It Be features a number of talented musicians from the West Midlands, including Wolverhampton-born Paul Canning who shares the role of John Lennon with

Birmingham's Reuven Gershon. Luke Roberts who plays Ringo Starr was born in Birmingham and lived in Leamington Spa. Emanuele Angeletti and Iain Hornal share the role of Paul McCartney, with Paul Mannion and John Brosnan playing George Harrison. They will be joined on stage by Michael Bramwell on keyboards.

Let It Be will be staged at Birmingham Hippodrome from Mon to Saturday, April 30, nightly plus matinees on Wednesday and Saturday. Tickets start from £13.50. Buy online at birminghamhippodrome.com or telephone 0844 338 5000.

Dial up a dark thriller

MADE famous by the Alfred Hitchcock movie starring Ray Milland and Grace Kelly, Dial M For Murder is coming to the stage at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Tuesday to Saturday, April 30.

Presented by talkingScarlet, the company behind last year's popular stage thriller The Ghost Train, Dial M For Murder stars former Coronation Street actor Oliver Mellor, pictured left as Tony Wendice, a manipulative former tennis pro who wants to get his hands on his wife's inheritance. Best known as Dr Matt Carter in the top ITV soap for three years, his other TV credits include Father Brown, Midsomer Murders and Doctors.

Wealthy

Playing the wealthy Mrs Sheila Wendice is Terri Dwyer, best known for her role as Ruth Osbourne in Hollyoaks. She also featured in three series of popular daytime show 60 Minute Makeover and is known for appearances on This Morning.

Brookside actor Marcus Hutton plays the rich wife's other man, Max Halliday. He has voiced hundreds of commercials and can be heard in Doctor Who audio dramas, as well as being remembered as Nathan Cuddington in the C4 soap.

Frederick Knott's intense and darkly gripping 1950s thriller promises plenty of twists and tension. It will be performed nightly with matinees on Wednesday and Saturday. See www.grandtheatre.co.uk or call 01902 429212. Tickets start from £13.50.

Saturday night disco fever with DJ PK

TICKETS have sold out for top comic Peter Kay's fundraising 'dance-a-thon party' in Birmingham on Saturday night with all of the profits going to Cancer Research UK.

The Barclaycard Arena will be transformed into a gigantic disco with DJ PK on the decks for what promises to be a memorable night out.

It is one of several giant fundraising parties the popular comedian is throwing at huge venues across the country in aid of the charity.

The disco-goers are being invited to wear fancy dress and to join Peter's 'Dance for Life' team at www.justgiving.com/teams/danceforlife

Acts from New York and New Zealand

NEW York duo We Are Scientists, who release their fifth album Helter Seltzer tomorrow, have a gig at Birmingham's O2 Institute on Wednesday.

Other upcoming highlights include New Zealand rising star Marlon Williams at the Hare and Hounds tonight (Thu). That Kings Heath venue also hosts quirky Lancashire pop couple The Lovely Eggs on Sunday and then London indie outfit Inheaven on Wednesday.

Downtown duo Macklemore & Ryan Lewis play the Barclaycard Arena on Tuesday, when Finnish 'folk-metal' outfit Korpiakani play the city's O2 Academy.

Hear blues sisters and a top soul man

THE Blues Caravan rolls into the Black Country to showcase the best female talent from the Ruf record label on Monday at Bilston's Robin 2 venue. The Blues Sisters show is a triple bill featuring Tasha Taylor, daughter of Stax soul legend Johnnie Taylor, sultry Finnish singer Ina Forsman and the highly-rated Canadian songstress Layla Zoe.

Fans of the genre can get a shot of hot R&B this side of the weekend when The James Hunter Six, led by the man described as the UK's best soul singer by Mojo, play Brum's O2 Institute 2 venue in Digbeth tomorrow night (Friday).

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CHOICE



The Durrells (ITV, 8pm)
Leslie falls in with a bad crowd and ends up being falsely accused of armed robbery, prompting Louisa to take desperate measures to save him. Margo takes a shine to a gardener at the Villa Mavrodaki, Captain Creech returns, and the family realises the extent of Gerry's passion for animals when he turns his bedroom into a centre for scientific learning. Guest starring Leslie Caron alongside Keeley Hawes, Josh O'Connor, Milo Parker, Daisy Waterstone, Callum Woodhouse, Lucy Black, James Cosmo, Alexis Georgoulis, Yorgos Karamihos, Ulric Von Der Esch, Anna Savva, Jeremy Swift, Vangelis Diamantis, Manolis Emmanouel, George Kopsidas, Jamie Ward, Andreas Karras and Nestoras Kopsidas.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **7.40** Match of the Day. (R) **8.30** London Marathon. **1.30** BBC News. **1.40** Regional Programme. **2.50** The Day I Met the Queen. (R) **3.50** Songs of Praise. **4.35** Elizabeth at 90 – A Family Tribute. (R)
6.05 **Paul O'Grady: The Sally Army and Me.** The presenter returns to his home city of Liverpool to help the local Salvation Army volunteers, coming to the aid of a woman whose life has been ruined by drug addiction.
6.35 **BBC News.**
6.50 **Regional Programme.**
7.00 **Countryfile.** The team looks at the landscapes across Britain that inspired Shakespeare, while John Craven is joined by Judi Dench to visit a town in Kent where the bard's company performed in 1605. Ellie Harrison explores Shakespeare's intimate knowledge of plants in Warwickshire, while Matt Baker visits the valley in the Brecon Beacons where A Midsummer Night's Dream is believed to have been written. Adam Henson examines Shakespeare's links with the wool trade and Joe Crowley visits the Minack theatre in Cornwall. Including Weather For The Week Ahead.
8.00 **Antiques Roadshow.** Fiona Bruce presents the show from Trentham Gardens near Stoke-on-Trent, where the experts value a selection of rare finds from the region's historic potteries.
9.00 **Undercover.** Nick resorts to a devastating lie to protect his secret. Maya searches for the missing witness, which leads to a shocking collision between her personal and professional lives.
10.00 **BBC News.**
10.20 **Regional Programme.**
10.30 **Match of the Day 2.** Mark Chapman reviews the latest Premier League action, featuring Leicester City v Swansea City.
11.40 **MOTO: FA Cup Highlights.** Crystal Palace v Watford. Action from the semi-final at Wembley Stadium, as the clubs aimed to reach the final for the first time since 1990 and 1984 respectively.
12.10 Would I Lie to You? (R) **12.40** Snooker: World Championship Extra. **3.40** World Snooker: Crucible Classics. **5.40** Weather for the Week Ahead. **5.45** BBC News.

BBC2

6.30 Gardeners' World. (R) **7.00** An Island Parish. (R) **7.30** The Beechgrove Garden. **8.00** Countryfile. (R) **9.00** The Andrew Marr Show. **10.00** Live Snooker: The World Championship. **12.15** MOTD2 Extra. Weather for the Week Ahead. **1.15** Points of View. **1.30** London Marathon. Further live coverage of the 36th staging of the annual event. **2.30** Live Snooker: The World Championship. The afternoon session on day nine at the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield.
6.00 **London Marathon Highlights.** Ore Oduba presents action from the 36th staging of the annual event, which saw approximately 38,000 runners take on the famous 26.2-mile course.
7.00 **Live Snooker: The World Championship.** Jason Mohammad presents coverage of the evening's play on day nine at the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield, featuring the second sessions of two matches in the second round. All four players will return to the arena tomorrow afternoon to conclude these fixtures, with the aim being to secure their place in the quarter-finals.
8.00 **Natural Born Winners.** Donovan Bailey, Gareth Thomas, Iwan Thomas and James Toseland complete their world tour in Japan, where they learn Yabusame, the ancient art of horseback archery. The sportsmen must ride a horse down a straight track at high speed, controlling the animal using their knees, and hit stationary targets with a bow and arrow. The experience brings back happy memories for James, but Gareth struggles with his fear of horses. Last in the series.
9.00 **Louis Theroux – Drinking to Oblivion.** The reporter visits the liver centre at King's College Hospital, London, and meets alcoholics in need of special treatment as well as their families and the doctors helping them.
10.00 **Film: Half of a Yellow Sun.** (2013) Premiere. Two sisters pursue separate lives in newly-liberated Nigeria, only to get caught up in the civil war. Drama, starring Thandie Newton.
11.45 **Snooker: The World Championship.**
12.35 The People v OJ Simpson: American Crime Story. (R) **1.40** Sign Zone: Countryfile. (R) **2.35** Holby City. (R) **3.35** This is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITY: Bottom Knocker Street. **6.15** Bottom Knocker Street. (R) **6.25** Pat & Stan. (R) **6.35** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.45** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **7.00** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.05** Sooty. (R) **7.15** Super 4. (R) **7.30** Nerds & Monsters. (R) **7.45** The Tom & Jerry Show. (R) **8.00** Teen Titans Go! (R) **8.25** ITV News. **8.30** Weekend. **9.25** FIA Formula E Championship. **10.20** Murder, She Wrote. (R) **11.20** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R) **12.20** ITV News: Weather. **12.30** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R) **1.30** All Star Family Fortunes. (R) **2.15** Fierce. (R) **3.15** Britain's Got Talent. (R) **4.35** Midsomer Murders. (R)
6.30 **Regional Programme;** Weather.
6.40 **ITV News;** Weather.
6.55 **The Chase Celebrity Special.** Bradley Walsh presents as celebrity contestants Nina Wadia, Linford Christie, Sarah Harding and Tiger Drew-Honey pit their wits against ruthless quiz genius the Chaser in the hope of winning a potential prize pot worth thousands of pounds. They must work as a team and play strategically to answer general knowledge questions against the clock and race down the game board to the exit without being caught.
8.00 **The Durrells.** Leslie falls in with a bad crowd and ends up being falsely accused of armed robbery, prompting Louisa to take desperate measures to save him. Margo takes a shine to a gardener at the Villa Mavrodaki, Captain Creech returns, and the family realises the extent of Gerry's passion for animals when he turns his bedroom into a centre for scientific learning.
9.00 **Home Fires.** Pat and Marek's relationship is in danger when someone sees them together. The full extent of David's injuries becomes apparent, and Teresa faces letting go of the past.
10.00 **ITV News;** Weather.
10.15 **Flying Scotsman with Robson Green.** The presenter spends a year working with the team of engineers who have been commissioned to rebuild the most famous steam engine in the world. (R)
11.15 **Murder, She Wrote.** (R) **12.15** Jackpot247. **2.30** Motorsport UK. **3.20** ITV Nightscreen. **5.05** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R)

CHANNEL 4

6.20 The King of Queens. (R) **6.45** The King of Queens. (R) **7.10** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.35** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.00** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.30** Frasier. (R) **9.00** Frasier. (R) **9.30** Sunday Brunch. **12.30** George Clarke's Amazing Spaces. (R) **1.30** Film: Maid in Manhattan. (2002) **3.35** Location, Location, Location. (R) **4.35** A Place in the Sun: Winter Sun. **8.35** Channel 4 News.
6.05 **Grand Designs: Living in Suburbia.** Kevin McCloud reveals how self-builders are transforming the suburbs, drawing on the best examples from 15 years of the show and talking to experts in architectural thinking. (R)
7.00 **The Fearless Chef.** Kiran Jethwa's world tour takes him to Ethiopia's Danakil Depression, one of the hottest regions on Earth, where he intends to mine for salt. He joins members of the nomadic Afar people in harvesting the salt from Lake Adera, then takes on the challenge of making ice cream in temperatures of 52C, using camel's milk with a fire extinguisher providing the coolant.
8.00 **The Mystery of the Crossrail Skulls.** Documentary examining the discovery of dozens of Roman-era skulls by engineers working beneath London's Liverpool Street station. The remains have been identified as dating back to Roman times, but it has yet to be determined who these people were and how their heads ended up buried on the site. Archaeologists examine the bones for evidence of the various theories that have been suggested, questioning whether the skulls belonged to gladiators, executed rebels or the victims of a massacre, or formed part of a grisly ritual.
9.00 **Indian Summers.** Ralph is forced to decide how far he is prepared to go to achieve his political goals when the Maharajah offers him a deal. Cynthia reveals a secret from her past.
10.00 **Gogglebox.** Capturing the households' instant reactions to what they are watching on TV from the comfort of their own sofas. (R)
11.05 **Film: The Lincoln Lawyer.** (2011) Thriller, with Matthew McConaughey and Marisa Tomei.
1.10 Embarrassing Bodies Down Under. (R) **2.00** Come Dine with Me. (R) **4.15** Selling Houses with Amanda Lamb.

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake!: Peppa Pig. **6.05** Bananas in Pyjamas. (R) **6.20** Angelina Ballerina. (R) **6.35** Bob the Builder. (R) **6.45** Ticky Toc. (R) **6.55** Zack and Quack. (R) **7.10** Patsy Stone. (R) **7.15** Noddy in Toyland. (R) **7.25** Paw Patrol. (R) **7.40** Little Princess. (R) **7.55** Pig Ahoy! (R) **8.10** Blaze and the Monster Machines. (R) **8.35** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **8.50** Wanda and the Alien. (R) **9.00** Toby's Travelling Circus. (R) **9.15** Jelly Jam. (R) **9.35** LazyTown. (R) **9.55** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. **10.30** The Championship: Football League Tonight. (R) **11.30** Goal Rush: Football League Tonight. (R) **12.00** The Gadget Show. (R) **1.00** Grannies Make You Laugh Out Loud. (R) **2.00** Buddies Make You Laugh Out Loud. (R) **3.00** Film: What to Expect When You're Expecting. (2012) Comedy drama, starring Cameron Diaz. **5.00** Film: Miss Congeniality. (2000) Comedy, starring Sandra Bullock.
7.00 **Now That's Funny!** Videos of people having very bad days and painful accidents at the US National ping pong championships. Plus, amusing facts about animals and more Stars of the Week.
8.00 **Penn & Teller: Fool Us in Vegas.** The duo try to spot the method behind more illusions, casting an eye over acts involving doves, ropes and a can of fizzy drink, as well as a performance by the magician who appeared at President Obama's inaugural ball. Finally, Penn and Teller play a prank on an audience member using a ring.
8.55 **5 News Weekend.**
9.00 **Film: Runner Runner.** (2013) Premiere. A student loses his savings in a rigged online poker game, so tracks down the site's owner to Costa Rica. He abandons his plans for revenge in favour of becoming the crooked gambling tycoon's protégé – but the FBI are soon pressuring him to help bring his boss to justice. Crime thriller, starring Justin Timberlake, Ben Affleck and Gemma Arterton.
10.40 **Film: Cradle 2 the Grave.** (2003) A Taiwanese undercover agent helps a master jewel thief track down the international criminal lord who has kidnapped his daughter. Action thriller, with Jet Li.
12.45 Criminals: Caught on Camera. (R) **1.10** SuperCasino. **3.10** World War II in Colour. (R) **4.00** Wildlife SOS. (R) **4.50** Great Artists. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four
7.00 Virtuoso Violinists at the BBC **8.00** Yehudi Menuhin: Who's Yehudi? **9.00** Arena: All The World's A Screen – Shakespeare on Film **10.00** Film: Forbidden Planet (1956) **11.35** Aliens: The Big Think **12.35** Horizon: Asteroids – The Good, the Bad and the Ugly **1.35** Natural World **2.35** Jerusalem: The Making of a Holy City **3.35** Close **ITV2**
2.55 FYI Daily **3.00** Film: The Flintstones (1994) **3.35** Film: Charlotte's Web (2006) **4.35** FYI Daily **4.40** Film: Charlotte's Web (2006) **5.30** Britain's Got Talent **6.50** Britain's Got More Talent **7.50** Film: Paranoia (2013) **8.50** FYI Daily **8.55** Film: Paranoia (2013) **10.00** Family Guy **11.55** American Dad! **12.55** The Cleveland Show **1.55** Total Bonkers Guinness World Records **2.20** Teleshopping **5.50** ITV2 Nightscreen **ITV3**
11.00 Film: Columbo: A Stitch in Crime (1973) **12.35** Film: The Queen (2006) **1.35** FYI Daily **1.40** Film: The Queen (2006) **2.40** Film: Ben-Hur (1959) **3.45** FYI Daily **3.50** Film: Ben-Hur (1959) **6.55** Doc Martin **8.00** The Cruise Ship **9.30** Royal Stories **9.00** Great Estates of Scotland **10.20** Film: Elizabeth: The Golden Age (2007) **11.35** FYI Daily **11.40** Film: Elizabeth: The Golden Age (2007) **12.40** A Touch of Frost **2.40** Doctor at Large **3.05** Mail the Best House Win **4.45** On the Buses **5.35** Judge Judy **ITV4**
12.30 Film: Deströy (1954) **1.30** FYI Daily **1.35** Film: Deströy (1954) **2.35** Film: The Cimarón Kid (1952) **3.35** FYI Daily **3.40** Film: The Cimarón Kid (1952) **4.15** Film: Thunderball (1965) **5.15** FYI Daily **5.20** Film: Thunderball (1965) **6.55** The Wine Show **8.00** River Monsters **9.05** Film: Assassins (1995) **10.10** FYI Daily **10.15** Film: Assassins (1995) **11.45** Film: Sleepers (1996) **12.50** FYI Daily **12.55** Film: Sleepers (1996) **2.30** Hogan's Heroes **3.00** AT Z **E4**
3.55 Film: St Trinian's 2: The Legend of Fritton's Gold (2009) **6.00** The Big Bang Theory **9.00** Marvel's Agents of SHIELD **10.00** Tattoo Fixers **11.00** The IT Crowd **12.10** The 100 **1.05** Marvel's Agents of SHIELD **2.05** Tattoo Fixers **3.00** A to Z **Film4**
1.00 The Spy Next Door (2010) **2.50** The Rugrats Movie (1999) **4.25** The Spy Who Came in from the Cold (1965) **6.50** Mission: Impossible (1996) **9.00** Her (2013) **11.25** sex, lies and videotape (1989) **1.30** Blind (2014) **3.30** Close

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FILM CHOICES

MONDAY

Killer Collector, Channel 5, 3.15pm

Two women at an auction unwittingly purchase a storage locker belonging to a serial killer that contains evidence of his crimes. They soon find themselves in a desperate race to uncover the truth before the murderer tracks them down. Thriller, directed by and starring Casper Van Dien. (2015)

TUESDAY

Nightmare from the Past, Channel 5, 3.15pm

Two decades after four high school students accidentally killed a mansion's owner, a mother faces a ghost from her youth in the form of the obsessed ex-con who paid the price for the friends' crimes. Thriller, starring Ashley Scott. (2015)

WEDNESDAY

Heartbreakers, Channel 4, 1.30am

Mother and daughter Max and Page develop a canny system of conning rich bachelors out of a fortune. Max marries the target, then Page seduces him, allowing for a lucrative divorce settlement. However, the scheme is threatened when Page falls in love, while a former victim tracks Max down hoping to give their marriage another chance. Comedy, starring Sigourney Weaver, Jennifer Love Hewitt, Gene Hackman, Ray Liotta and Jason Lee. (2001)



Tomorrow Never Dies, Friday, ITV, 10.40pm

THURSDAY

Cradle of Lies, Channel 5, 3.10pm

A woman awakes from a coma with no memory, until a scar on her abdomen stimulates flashes of her past and she remembers giving birth while she was unconscious. Thriller, starring Nicole de Boer. (2015)

FRIDAY

Tomorrow Never Dies, ITV, 10.40pm

James Bond joins forces with a Chinese agent to foil a media mogul's scheme to start a war between their countries. Using an undetectable stealth ship, the press baron plans an attack on both nations' navies, knowing they will blame each other – giving him exclusive global media coverage of the resulting conflict. Spy adventure, starring Pierce Brosnan, Jonathan Pryce and Michelle Yeoh. (1997)

Stage stars celebrate Shakespeare's skills

You can run but you can't hide from the Bard – he's everywhere, almost omnipotent, whether you realise it or not.

Many well-worn everyday phrases first appeared in his works, while his stories continue to have a major influence on popular culture today, so it seems only right that we should celebrate his life and legacy – even if it is on the 400th anniversary of his death.

"BBC2 is playing a central role in the BBC's Shakespeare celebrations and I'm delighted we will be showing this very special piece which typifies the new ambition and scale we are bringing to arts programming on the channel," explains Kim Shillinglaw, controller of BBC2 and BBC4.

David Tennant may be best known for his starring roles in Doctor Who and Broadchurch, but he's no stranger to William Shakespeare's works, having appeared on stage in the likes of Hamlet, Love's Labour's Lost, Much Ado About Nothing and Richard III.

He's also hugely popular, particularly with younger viewers, so is

perhaps the ideal person to front this two-hour-long programme – he has the knowledge of the subject to carry it off, and the appeal to attract those who might not otherwise have tuned in.

Tennant will be joined on stage at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-Upon-Avon by his fellow actors Judi Dench, Ian McKellen, Meera Syal and Joseph Fiennes, musician Rufus Wainwright, rapper Akala and comedy star Tim Minchin, all of whom share their thoughts on the Bard's enduring influence on the performing arts, from his home medium of the theatre, through to opera, jazz, dance and musicals.

There's also a chance to see contributions by performers from the English National Opera and The Royal Ballet.

"Shakespeare gives us a 360 degree view of what it is to be human and has inspired creativity across every art form," says Gregory Doran, the RSC's artistic director. "This live event is the highlight of what will be an extraordinary year for Shakespeare fans, and gives us a chance to

celebrate just how far his genius has travelled, influencing artists down the centuries and across the world."

As Doran says, there are more special programmes and events on their way from the BBC and RSC.

"Our ambition is to get more people excited about Shakespeare than ever before – through drama, great performance, documentary, festivals and social media too," reveals Tony Hall, director-general of the BBC. "We're partnering with talent right across the country and delighted to be working with the RSC. 2016 is going to be the biggest celebration of Shakespeare we've ever put on – for everyone."

So, keep your eye out for a heap of Shakespearean goodies in the future, including a retelling of A Midsummer Night's Dream by Russell T. Davies, which will star Maxine Peake, Matt Lucas, Bernard Cribbins and Elaine Paige, and there will also be three more episodes of The Hollow Crown, this time featuring an all-star cast that includes Benedict Cumberbatch, Sophie Okonedo, Hugh Bonneville and Michael Gambon.



David Tennant (right) presents Shakespeare Live! From the RSC, Saturday, BBC2, 8.30pm

BEST OF THE REST

MONDAY

Flowers

Channel 4, 10pm

New series. Comedy about an eccentric family struggling to hold themselves together, beginning with a double bill. Children's author Maurice and his music teacher wife Deborah live in a crumbling old house with his ailing mother Hattie and their maladjusted 25-year-old twins Amy and Donald. An already black day for Maurice turns into a nightmare when Deborah insists on celebrating their anniversary, while Amy and Donald vie for the affections of their lovely neighbour Abigail.

Marcella

ITV, 9pm

In the recent second series of Happy Valley, Sarah Lancashire was briefly a suspect in a murder case due to her prior history with the victim, but it seemed no one genuinely thought she'd done it – they just wanted to officially rule her out. However, if it becomes common knowledge that Marcella Backland, the volatile heroine of this detective series, was the one of the last people to see Grace Gibson alive, she might genuinely be in the frame, thanks to that very nasty temper of hers. So, it's not surprising that the detective is keen to find the taxi driver from outside Gibson's house to find out if he

can place her there on the night of murder. Meanwhile, an aborted attack on an elderly man gives the police a new lead in the Grove Park Killings.

TUESDAY

Fierce

ITV, 8pm

Steve Backshall travels to Guyana, home to gigantic anaconda, piranha, jaguar and other lethal predators. His adventure begins by flying 340-miles south-west from the capital Georgetown to the remote Central Rupununi rainforest. He also visits a remote stretch of the rainforest on the Mapari River, and searches for an electric eel. Aside from tracking down the bullet ant, so named because one sting feels like being shot, Steve also holds a bird-eating tarantula, and gets a rare sighting of the endangered giant river otter.

WEDNESDAY

MasterChef

BBC1, 9pm

It's the semi-finals, which calls for a huge challenge – and the remaining eight contestants are

about to face their toughest task to date. They are heading to the biggest naval base in Western Europe, ready to serve lunch to members of the Royal Navy on board the anti-submarine frigate HMS Northumberland. Split into two teams of four and given a kitchen in a specially constructed catering tent, they'll have less than four hours to create two main courses and a dessert to feed 110 members of the ship's company. Whichever team's efforts aren't judged quite shipshape by judges John Torode and Gregg Wallace will have to head back to the MasterChef kitchen for a cook-off, using leftovers from the previous challenge.



Flowers, Monday, Channel 4, 10pm

THURSDAY

Line of Duty

BBC2, 9pm

The third series of Jed Mercurio's police procedural began with a big twist when Daniel Mays' bad guy was killed off at the end of episode one. After four

equally gripping episodes which delved further into the corruption scandal hinted at in series one and two – and reintroduced Keeley Hawes as anti-hero Lindsay Denton – it seems the feature-length finale promises to up the ante as one of the AC-12 officers finds themselves on the other side of the interview table on suspicion of murder. AC-12 legal counsel Gill Bigglelow puts pressure on Supt Ted Hastings, only for new evidence to turn the inquiry on its head. An undercover investigation may provide the key – but will the unit ever uncover the truth about the Caddy? Martin Compston, Vicky McClure, Adrian Dunbar and Polly Walker star.

FRIDAY

The Secret

ITV, 9pm

New series. Drama set in 1990 Northern Ireland, starring James Nesbitt as respected dentist Colin Howell, who falls for Hazel Buchanan at his local Baptist church and embarks upon a passionate affair. Wanting to remain in the church, Colin refuses to consider divorce, but he and Hazel are desperate to find some way to be together. When Lesley's father dies and she contemplates suicide, Colin believes that he has found a way forward and both enter a deadly pact. With Genevieve O'Reilly, Laura Pyper and Glen Wallace.

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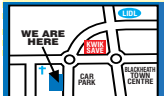
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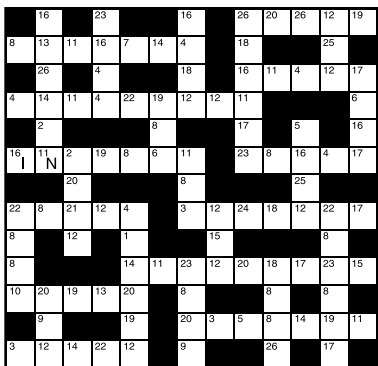
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BRAIN GYM No.374

Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



1	14
2	15
3	16
4	17
5	18
6	19
7	20
8	21
9	22
10	23
11	24
12	25
13	26

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

F	D	P	X	A	K	M	C	R	Y	Q	N	W
J	S	Z	G	B	U	O	T	E	H	L	V	I

Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

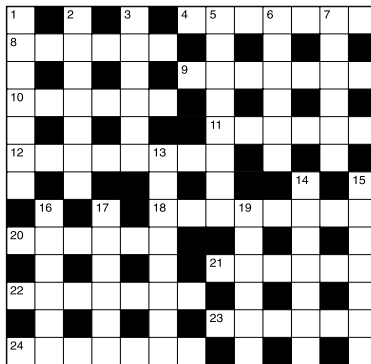
Cryptic Clues:

Across

- Wrongly name the girl, we hear, by a telephone conversation (7)
- This clue is not to be believed (6)
- It has a pronounced similarity to another word (7)
- Takes steps to show the markings of tyres (6)
- Hold back - farther back! (6)
- Add to the number in the fold (8)
- Nothing follows an order for task force (8)
- The Government ease restrictions - a tricky problem is seen in this (6)
- Men go crazy after one Shakespearean woman (6)
- Circulates advertisement in press arrangement (7)
- 23 & 16 Dn. Elves of no great standing (6,6)
- This shows the concentration of matter contained in the volume (7)

Down

- Will certainly ruin act, if out of order (7)
- Exaggerate to increase the tension (7)
- Overcome - because subscription hasn't yet been paid? (6)
- The more this varies, the more the heat is the same! (8)
- They provide splendid cover for the capitals of rulers (6)
- Take a gamble on the fellows being non-professionals (6)
- Certify as satisfactory an account with favourable balance (8)
- Dark times, we hear, for chivalrous characters (7)
- What the jumpers did is limited (7)
- See 23 Across
- A fool holds fixed property of the deceased (6)
- Biographical record of me in the sea in France (6)



Quick Clues:

Across

- Important (7)
- Referee (6)
- Stranded (7)
- Deadly (8)
- People (6)
- Changeable (8)
- Absurd (8)
- Energy (6)
- Unfold (6)
- Erased (7)
- Contusion (6)
- By now (7)

Down

- Survive (7)
- Parvenu (7)
- Fleet of warships (6)
- Contrive (8)
- Development (6)
- Sinew (6)
- To favour (8)
- Applause (7)
- Changed (7)
- Wicked (6)
- Give (6)
- Secret (6)

Sudoku

	5	8	6	7				
3		7		5		9		
		7			4			
	3	4	1			5		
6			5	7			4	
	8		6	2		1		
	9				2			
	2		7	3			6	
5			1	8	9			

Fill in the grid below so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >

5	6	2	3	7	9	1	4	8
3	8	7	5	1	4	2	9	5
4	9	1	2	5	8	6	3	7
2	7	9	8	6	5	3	1	4
8	5	4	9	3	1	7	6	2
1	3	6	4	2	7	8	5	9
9	4	3	1	8	2	5	7	6
6	2	5	7	4	3	9	8	1
7	1	8	5	9	6	4	2	3

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS: CRYPTIC - Across: 1 Stock-market; 9 Rip; 10 Unhealthy; 11 Lacks; 13 Whistle; 14 Sounds; 16 Aitre; 18 Nitrate; 19 Light; 20 Secretary; 21 Tar; 22 Hard-headed. Down: 2 Top; 3 Clubs; 4 Mohawk; 5 Realist; 6 Entitling; 7 Artlessness; 8 Type-setters; 12 Crustacea; 15 Dead-end; 17 Sesame; 19 Layer; 21 Tee. QUICK - Across: 1 Acknowledge; 9 Put; 10 Vigilance; 11 Recur; 13 Apparel; 14 Punish; 16 beaten; 18 Imagine; 19 cadet; 20 Tangerine; 21 Tan; 22 Traditional. Down: 2 Cut; 3 Never; 4 Wigwag; 5 Eclipse; 6 Generated; 7 Appropriate; 8 Wellingtons; 12 Container; 15 Stipend; 17 Desist; 19 Credo; 21 Tea.

Quiz

- What do we call the city Den Haag?
- To whom are the Old Testament Psalms traditionally ascribed?
- Which US state is nicknamed the Centennial State?
- Which former Blue Peter presenter was the first civilian in Britain to free-fall from five miles up?
- Which race did legendary ruler Hengist command?
- Which part of the body is affected by glaucoma?
- Who wrote the opera Carmen?
- Through which mountain range do the St Bernard Passes pass?
- In which constellation is Rigel?
- Which fruit comes from the tree Prunus persica?

Last week's solutions:

Quiz: 1 South Africa; 2 Hormone

Replacement Therapy; 3 South Korea;

4 A tidal wave; 5 Sherry; 6 Duke of

Marlborough; 7 1982; 8 Tangerine; 9 Mark

Twain; 10 Richard II.

Niner: NUMERICAL

Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

2472 gives a song,
51942 gives a musical drama,
856232 gives a musical composition.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

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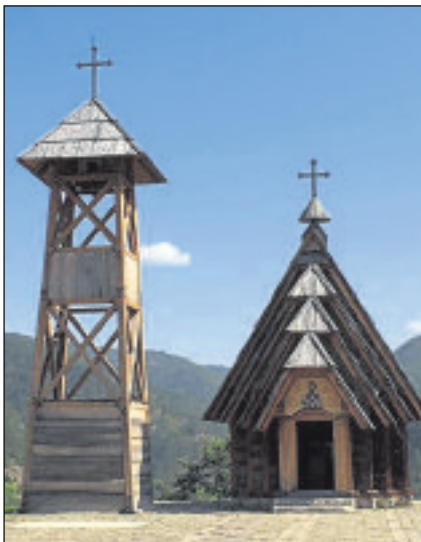
Go with the flow – the house on stilts on the River Drina



A woman sells knitwear in Drvengrad



Inside the Pustinja Monastery, decorated with frescoes of Serbian saints



The tiny church in Drvengrad

Europe's best kept secret with magical sights round every corner

OFTEN overlooked in favour of its popular neighbour Croatia, Serbia doesn't really register as a top choice for a holiday.

I have to admit, my own knowledge of the country, which celebrates a decade of independence this year, is patchy.

Aside from Slobodan Milosevic's well-documented years of tyrannical rule in the 90s, when the country was part of the former Yugoslavia, I know next to nothing. But images of hardship belong to a distant past; instead a trendy and affordable short break destination is emerging.

After a two-hour flight from Heathrow, I arrive in Belgrade. The Serbian capital has been destroyed and rebuilt more than 40 times, resulting in a patchwork of architectural designs. I gravitate towards the

By Frances Wright

Savamala district with its bohemian bars and riverfront clubs. Seeking penance after a hard night on the tiles, I head west of Belgrade to the Pustinja Monastery in the village of Pocuta. Originally built in the 13th century during the reign of King Dragutin, the monastery now standing dates back to the 17th century.

I'm greeted by a group of resident nuns, who appear to be almost as old as the monastery itself. Overcoming the language barrier, they welcome us with a traditional offering of honey and hot water and lead us on a tour through the building decorated with frescoes of Serbian saints, including St Sava.

Even more unusual is fairytale village Drvengrad, part of the picturesque Zlatibor district, surrounded by the Tara National

Park and a three-hour drive from Belgrade.

It was built in 2003 as a film set by the acclaimed Serbian film director Emir Kusturica for his film *Life Is A Miracle*. It is now a fully functioning village where Emir lives and hosts his annual film festival.

Emir grew up in war-torn Sarajevo and has said his desire to build Drvengrad was born from the destruction of his own town.

Desire

All the streets are named after people Emir respects and admires, such as footballer Diego Maradona, revolutionary Che Guevara and, of course, national hero and tennis ace Novak Djokovic.

The bizarre settlement has 25 timber cottages where tourists can stay, a church, the Stanley Kubrick cinema and an ideological prison, where imaginary inhabitants include those who still live among us, such as

George Bush. I'm particularly enamoured by the church, a small wooden structure with portraits of Madonna and child.

Delicious traditional Serbian food is served at the village restaurant, where I dine on meat, cheese and lots and lots of bread. Dishes are inspired by a number of cultures, borrowing from German, Greek and Turkish cuisine. Best of all, it's cheap – a three-course meal with wine for £6.

Near to Drvengrad, on the border of Serbia and Bosnia, is the stunning river Drina, where I take a rafting trip. We calmly float past rural orthodox churches, until we reach an isolated house on stilts near the town of Bajina Basta. It was built by local boys in 1968 and has been standing on a rock for nearly 50 years.

Serbia feels like Europe's best-kept secret, with magical experiences around every corner.

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London is the natural home of theatre and the musical is king in the capital's world-famous West End. British musicals that prove a runaway success here, often go on to triumph on Broadway and around the globe. The winning combination of engaging writing, captivating stage design and commanding performance has enabled London theatres to achieve box office smashes time and time again.

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There's a selection of London hotels to choose from (supplements may apply) and rail travel is standard class with the option to upgrade. Departs Saturday from Birmingham New Street, Shrewsbury, Stafford or Wolverhampton, returning on the Sunday.

The ticket is for a Saturday evening performance.

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Theatre Showstopper from £239.⁹⁵

This popular theatre package to the West End departs from Birmingham New Street, Shrewsbury, Stafford or Wolverhampton on the Friday returning on Sunday.

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Includes a top priced ticket for a Friday evening performance.

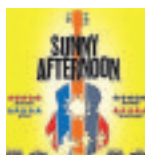
Coach inclusive breaks – Two days

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Theatre Weekend with Dinner from £159.⁹⁵

For the Theatre Weekend with Dinner option, see the matinee performance before heading to the hotel for an evening meal. The Saturday Night option includes a ticket for the evening performance (meal not included).

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YEW TREE Nursing Home is a well established home located in the picturesque rural village of Romsley, close to the post office, shops and pub.

With 41 bedrooms over two floors the home is set in extensive grounds with both patio areas and sun terraces overlooking the beautiful countryside and beyond.

There is also a secluded and enclosed ornamental patio area which is accessible at anytime enabling the residents to grow herbs and vegetables and to take part in gardening activities as part of their daily living.

Alternatively, residents can just relax in one of the many seating areas and enjoy the fresh air and peaceful location of

the home with only the sound of the wind chimes, the water feature and occasionally the hens or pony saying hello to break the ambience.

There are four lounges, each with its own unique character. The front lounge is within our specialised Dementia Unit which has recently undergone a full refurbishment.

The Garden Lounge is the largest in the home with a bright and airy feel with countryside views and accessibility for all residents to the outside Sun Terrace.

We also have two quaint lounges which have a more private, intimate and relaxing environment, ideal for family visits and special occasions. Yew Tree Nursing Home also has its own pets. We have Duncan the Shetland pony, Gemma the cat,

Bright and airy feel with countryside views and accessibility for all our residents to the outside sun terrace

Joe the budgerigar, John and James the guinea pigs and hens collectively called the Cheeky Girls. Pets often expand the sociability of older people and have a positive benefit on our residents' well being.

Yew Tree has also been awarded the 'Gold Standards Framework' in Care Homes. The GSF (Gold Standards Framework) is a systematic, evidence based ap-

proach to optimising care for all patients approaching the end of their life.

Yew Tree Nursing Home also organises day trips throughout the spring and summer and has stag and hen parties whenever a member of staff is getting married.

Yew Tree Nursing Home aims to provide its residents with a secure, relaxed and homely environment in which their care, well being and comfort is of prime importance. All staff will preserve and maintain dignity, individuality and privacy of all residents within a warm and caring environment and in doing so will be sensitive to the residents' ever-changing needs.

For all any further information or to arrange a visit, please call Carol Lightwood (Home Manager) or Vicky Mills (Business Manager) on 01562 710809

BUSINESS PROFILE

Business:

Yew Tree Nursing Home

Address:

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Telephone:

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Website:

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Yew Tree Nursing Home

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WITHYMOOR, Aldeford Drive£725 pcm+Fees
Well presented semi detached house situated on this popular estate. Occupying a quiet cul de sac location. Featuring an attractive lounge with breakfast kitchen to the rear. To the 1st floor there are 3 bedrooms and a family bathroom, whilst to the outside there are gardens to front and rear. In addition, there is a garage and drive, and the property benefits from gas fired central heating and double glazing. Not to be missed! EPC: D



WOLVERHAMPTON, Chelston Drive£650 pcm+Fees
A 3 bedroom detached home located in a quiet cul de sac location and benefits gas central heating and double glazing. The accommodation briefly comprises a reception hall, lounge, dining room, fitted kitchen, conservatory, 3 bedrooms, garage and paved driveway. EPC: TBC



BIRMINGHAM, St Pauls Square£850 pcm+Fees
A part furnished 2nd floor studio apartment. The apartment is ready for immediate occupation has accommodation (accessed via secure concierge entrance) to comprise a hallway, fitted bathroom suite with shower over, bedroom area with fitted wardrobes, open plan kitchen/lounge area with fitted appliances, including fridge, oven, hob and washing machine. EPC: TBC



CRADLEY HEATH, Waterfall Lane£625 pcm+Fees
Located within a short distance of Old Hill Train Station, a short drive from Black Heath and Cradley Heath, is this modern town house, featuring 3 bedrooms, 2 spacious lounges, house bathroom with shower, downstairs wc, small enclosed garden, driveway for 1 car and also benefits from an integrated garage. EPC: TBC



BRIERLEY HILL, Bittern Walk£595 pcm+Fees
A lovely extended totally refurbished semi detached residence ideal for a family. The property comprises 3 bedrooms, fitted kitchen, lounge, bathroom, driveway and garage, double glazing and gas central heating. Close to local shops. EPC: D



HALESOWEN, Howley Grange Road£595 pcm+Fees
An extended unfurnished semi detached family home in popular location for Howley Grange Primary School. Benefiting from gas central heating, double glazing, 2 reception rooms, fitted kitchen, conservatory, 2 double bedrooms, family bathroom with shower, front and rear gardens. EPC: D



HALESOWEN, Hilltop Ave £595 pcm+Fees
A lovely end terraced property recently fully refurbished, close to Halesowen Town Centre featuring large reception room with dining area, brand new fitted kitchen, 2 double bedrooms, bathroom suite with shower, large low maintenance paved rear garden, driveway for 2 cars. EPC: D



HALESOWEN, The Forge £595 pcm+Fees
A modern 2 bedroom semi detached property situated in a quiet cul de sac and within walking distance to Cradley Heath Train Station, bus links and shops. Featuring a great living room, conservatory, kitchen, 2 bedrooms, bathroom with shower, private rear garden, driveway, gas central heating. EPC: TBC



ROWLEY REGIS, Alsops Close£595 pcm+Fees
A very well presented unfurnished modern 2 bedroom home in a popular residential location. Accommodation comprises of lounge with patio doors leading to conservatory, kitchen, 2 bedrooms and family bathroom, gas central heating, private rear garden, allocated parking for 1 car. EPC: C



ROWLEY REGIS, Mount Road£575 pcm+Fees
An unfurnished semi detached family home in a popular location, briefly comprising of: 3 bedrooms, double glazing, gas central heating, spacious living room, kitchen, guest wc, bathroom with shower, front and rear gardens and driveway parking. EPC: D



HALESOWEN, Barnswood Close£575 pcm+Fees
A well presented newly painted mid terraced property comprising hallway with stairs to first floor, fitted kitchen, large lounge with patio doors to the rear garden, double glazing, gas central heating, double bedroom with fitted wardrobes and a further smaller double, white bathroom suite with shower over bath and tiled floor off road parking at the front of the property. EPC: TBC



HALESOWEN, Talbot Street£550 pcm+Fees
●●● 1ST MONTHS RENT HALF PRICE ●●● A fabulous newly renovated mid-terrace house with complete re-wire, new alarm system, new roof, new 1/4 rated Bosch boiler, gas central heating, new carpets & decorated throughout comprising 2 reception rooms, fitted kitchen, downstairs bathroom with shower, 3 bedrooms, rear garden, on road parking. Ideally located a short distance from local shops, Cradley Train Station and the number 9 bus route. EPC: E



KIDDERMINSTER, Patin House£550 pcm+Fees
A superb ground floor apartment set in a converted Victorian house offering under floor heating, open plan lounge, fitted kitchen with appliances and granite worktops, large bathroom with shower, 1 double and 1 large single bedroom, allocated parking and well kept communal gardens. Available immediately. EPC: C



CRADLEY HEATH, Delingpole Walk£550 pcm+Fees
Located on a popular development, close to local train station this is unfurnished, mid mews house, briefly comprising: gas central heating, living room, fitted kitchen, downstairs wc, 2 bedrooms, bathroom with shower, rear garden, garage. EPC: C



HALESOWEN/COLLEY GATE, Ladysmith Road£525 pcm+Fees
A mid terraced house in a sought after area for Colley Lane Primary School, bus links to Halesowen and Stourbridge. This house features 2 reception rooms, fitted kitchen with oven, hob, dining area, new downstairs shower room, 2 good size bedrooms, double glazing, gas central heating, rear garden. EPC: TBC



HALESOWEN, Hagley Road (Rosegardens)£525 pcm+Fees
An unfurnished 1st floor coach house apartment within walking distance to Halesowen Town Centre and on a major bus route. Featuring gas central heating, living room, fitted kitchen, 2 bedrooms, bathroom with shower, parking space, and a lovely communal garden. An internal inspection is highly recommended. EPC: TBC



QUINTON, Lapal Manor Court£525 pcm+Fees
An unfurnished ground floor apartment briefly comprising: living room/fitted kitchen, 2 double bedrooms, bathroom with shower. Benefits include gas central heating, secure allocated parking. Ideal location for motorway access. EPC: TBC



DUDLEY, Southgate Way £499 pcm+Fees
A stunning and spacious well presented furnished to suit 1st floor apartment featuring 2 bedrooms, electric storage heating, double glazing, open plan living room with fitted kitchen, house bathroom with shower, allocated parking space. Viewing highly recommended. EPC: C



SEDGLEY, Tudor Vale £495 pcm+Fees
Located in this ever popular cul-de-sac is this end mews house, briefly comprising of: gas central heating, spacious living room, fitted dining kitchen, downstairs WC, 2 double bedrooms, bathroom with shower, rear garden, driveway parking, unfurnished. EPC: C



OLDBURY, Causeway Green Road£450 pcm+Fees
Deceptively large and spacious. A split level apartment above local shops, within walking distance to bus links for Langley and Oldbury and close to J2 of the M5 comprises gas central heating, spacious living room, fitted kitchen, 2 double bedrooms, bathroom with shower, parking to rear, with the added bonus of a porch, unfurnished. EPC: D



CRADLEY HEATH, Victoria Gardens£395 pcm+Fees
A modern top floor apartment, in the centre of Old Hill with local bus stop outside and Old Hill train station close by. This apartment comprises of 1 double bedroom, electric storage heating, double glazing, fitted kitchen, bathroom with shower, allocated parking, unfurnished. EPC: C

PROPERTY

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A SUBSTANTIAL detached family home in Stream Road, Kingswinford, is for sale through Taylors at £549,000.

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Appealing modern house located in a popular area



A SPLENDID modern double fronted, spacious four-bedroom detached family home in Northgate Close, Dudley, is on a popular estate. It is for sale through Trinity Property at £249,950.

With double glazing and central heating, it has an entrance hall, downstairs WC, a kitchen/dining room, a lounge/living room with patio doors to the rear patio/garden, spacious landing with loft access and storage cupboards, four bedrooms including three double and one single, with the master en-suite, and a bathroom/WC with shower over bath.

There is a garage/carport, small lawn, and to the rear a paved patio and garden.

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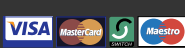
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commercial premises sale / let

6 Property

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Focus RS a bargain on power and fun

By Ian Donaldson

PUSH a button in the new 165mph Focus RS and you'll enjoy the sort of pops and bangs from two huge exhaust pipes that turn a tame drive to work into the first corner at Silverstone.

If it all sounds barely road legal, you'd be right. It took three visits from the Euro compliance people to Ford's prototype plant in Germany before they had to agree the car was quiet enough for the public road — just.

Push the same button again and the car will easily drift in a wide circle with all four tyres shrieking and scrabbling for grip — impressive in a Top Gear sort of way but best kept to a test track with a Michelin supply truck on call. This 'drift' mode in the car's set up is a tell tale to the way the Ford development team approached this third Focus to wear the RS ultimate performance badge — make it fun to own, in spades.

It takes no more than a few yards to appreciate that it's mission accomplished for the Cologne-based RS crew and not many more to conclude this is the bargain performance car of the year.

At £29,995 on-the-road it's no surprise that order books are bulging with more than 3,000 UK buyers wanting their own Focus RS as soon as possible — and happily adding another £3,500 worth of options to their cars. Even then it's still cheap for the sort of performance on offer — a 165mph top speed and dash to 62mph in 4.7 seconds are heroic figures, made possible from a 2.3 litre turbocharged engine that pumps out 350 horsepower all day long.

That's the obvious part of the new RS's attraction; have one in nitrous blue (a £745 option chosen by more than half the buyers to date) and the car looks the part of barely tamed road tiger too.

At the front you'll find a huge radiator grille, covered with special mesh that lets the most air possible through to the biggest intercooler the RS team could squeeze into the car (it keeps the air entering the engine as dense as possible, which is good for power.)

At the rear there's a modest roof spoiler and F1-style diffuser beneath the bumper, both helping to cut rear end lift at speed to zero. That's rare on a road car and an indication of the depth of development that has produced the latest RS. And between the two extremes you'll find a permanent all-wheel drive system that helps keep the car safe, yet drive like something that enjoys power through its rear wheels. And it does, scampering along UK byways with the tenacity of a terrier at play.

The wonder is that the car then rides rougher roads with settled aplomb, always sportingly firm but soaking up the bumps beautifully. That's a hard trick to pull off, but here is a car that could double up as family transport without batting an eyelid — why, it even has four doors and a decent boot.

A little less user friendly is an official fuel consumption of 36.7mpg, but easily dropped to the low-twenties. Exhaust emissions of 175/gms will hurt the pocket too, with £295 road tax in year one and £205 thereafter.

Chunky 19ins alloy wheels cover big uprated brakes that come as part of the RS package, while the sport theme continues inside with a trio of extra instruments on the dash top and Recaro seats — uprated in the test car with a pair of extra deep semi-race style Recaros (£1,145) that weren't too hard to climb out of and added a dollop of track appeal.

Back to the practicalities; it might not be a lot of money for the driving pleasure on offer but the new RS is not light on non-sporting fixtures and fittings.

Standard kit includes bi-xenon headlights, heated windscreen, dual zone air conditioning, touchscreen DAB audio system, electric and heated door mirrors, electric windows all round, auto dimming rear view mirror and — for UK cars — a special alarm system.

That ought to make the RS hard to steal. Not difficult to appreciate why some tea leaf might want to, though.

Plug-in market gearing up

Launched back in April 2014, the award-winning Mitsubishi Outlander PHEV has effectively defined the emergence of the UK's plug-in hybrid sector.

In 2013, the year before its arrival, the total plug-in hybrid market across all marques stood at just 989.

Two years on there are 21,053 Mitsubishi Outlander PHEVs on the UK's roads.

Lance Bradley, managing director of Mitsubishi Motors in the UK, said:

'Introducing new technology is very challenging and to sell over 21,000 Outlander PHEVs in the first two years has been an incredible achievement.'

'People are being increasingly attracted to environmental vehicle performance and the economy it delivers. However they still want to have a car that is great to drive and doesn't cost significantly more than an equivalent traditional petrol or diesel powered car.'

Continuing the success story, in the first three months of 2016 total market registrations of plug-in hybrid passenger cars are 7,468. Over half of which are Mitsubishi Outlander PHEVs.

In two short years Outlander PHEV sales have overtaken every other plug-in hybrid and pure electric car, even passing vehicles that have been around since 2011 such as the Nissan Leaf.

The Outlander PHEV has become the UK's number one choice.

It's not difficult to see why it is proving so popular. It boasts impressive fuel economy and ultra-low emissions – in a vehicle with the go-anywhere ability of four-wheel-drive. Combining electric and petrol power it has a range of 541 miles – 32 miles in electric mode alone, which is more than enough to accommodate the average daily commute.



Fiat's attractive offers for business car users

Fiat UK has launched a competitive new contract hire promotion aimed specifically at business users.

There are extremely attractive offers available across the Fiat range but a highlight will undoubtedly be the Fiat 500X 1.6 MultiJet II 120hp Pop Star which is available from just £155 per month (excluding VAT) with a low £954 initial rental (ex VAT) and a sensible 10,000 mile annual mileage allowance over the course of the 36 month contract.

With excellent fuel economy of 68.9MPG (official combined cycle), CO2 emissions of just 109g/km and inexpensive regular maintenance, the Fiat 500X's low running costs will keep the accounts department happy, while the user gets to enjoy the distinctive styling, superb ride and handling characteristics, impressive refinement and high standard specification of the new Fiat 500X Pop Star, which includes 17-inch alloy wheels, rear parking sensors,

dual-zone climate control, cruise control and a five-inch Uconnect touchscreen infotainment system with Bluetooth audio streaming, USB port, DAB digital radio and satellite navigation all as standard.

Monthly rentals for business users wishing to drive a Fiat 500X start at just £133 over three years for the Fiat 500X Pop 1.6 E-Torq 110hp with a £798 initial rental. For more information, including full terms and conditions of the Business Contract Hire arrangement, business users can contact any participating Fiat dealership in the UK, where this promotion can also be tailored to the specific requirements of individual business users.

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Interested business users can visit <http://www.fiat.co.uk/fleet-services/fleet/contract-hire-offers> or contact the Fiat UK Business Centre on 01753 519 442 during business hours or email fiat.fleet@fcagroup.com



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Fuel consumption figures for the CR-V SE 1.6 i-DTEC 2WD Manual mpg (l/100km): Urban 61.4 (4.6), Extra Urban 67.3 (4.2), Combined 64.2 (4.4). CO2 emissions: 115g/km.

Fuel consumption figures sourced from official EU-regulated laboratory test results, are provided for comparison purposes and may not reflect real-life driving experience. Model shown: CR-V SE 1.6 i-DTEC 2WD Manual in Lunar Silver Metallic at £26,610 On The Road (OTR). Terms and Conditions: New retail CR-V ordered from 01 April 2016 to 30 June 2016 and registered by 30 June 2016. Subject to model and colour availability. Offers applicable at participating dealers and are at the promoter's absolute discretion. Not to be used along with any other offers currently available. *Honda Deposit contribution: £3,000 Honda deposit contribution on CR-V models purchased through Honda Aspirations, Brindley Honda deposit contribution £2000 (exclusive to Brindley Honda). Honda Aspirations (PCP): Minimum customer deposit 0%, maximum customer deposit 30%. You do not have to pay the Final Payment if you return the car at the end of the agreement and you have paid all other amounts due, the vehicle is in good condition and has been serviced in accordance with the Honda service book and the maximum annual mileage has not been exceeded. Indemnities may be required in certain circumstances. Finance is only available to persons aged 18 or over, subject to status. All figures are correct at time of publication but may be subject to change. Brindley Garages Ltd trading as Brindley Honda are credit brokers, not lenders. Credit provided by Honda Finance Europe Plc. Cain Road, Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 1HL. Honda Finance Europe plc is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. Financial Services Register number 312541. **5 Years' Servicing includes: All scheduled servicing, as detailed in the vehicle's service book, will be covered for 5 years or 62,500 miles, whichever comes first. 5 Years' Servicing is optional. It is being offered for £555 including VAT (usual value £1,430 including VAT, resulting in a £875 saving for the customer) and is available to finance or non-finance customers. Please note, should you sell the vehicle during the period of cover, the package remains with the vehicle. Cars must be ordered by 30 April and delivered by 30 June 2016.

Lexus makes bold statement

By Ian Donaldson

THERE'LL be no mistaking the new Lexus RX200t at the golf club, from the front, most certainly.

This fourth generation large, luxury SUV from Toyota's posh division is no shrinking violet in the looks department.

The vast radiator grille makes what Lexus calls a 'powerful visual statement' and will ensure it's easy to pick out from the sea of Range Rovers, Audi Q7s and BMW X5s that are this car's natural competition.

To these eyes this new-found visual boldness works a treat, toning itself down a little as the gaze moves along the side of the car – all dramatic swoops and swerves – before

concluding in a tail that picks up the angled theme of the front. Inside, things are more typically Lexus. That means an almost pared back feel, using leather and high grade plastics in a combination that quietly tells of good taste and attention to detail.

It was plenty good enough to impress the owner of a nearly new Range Rover Sport who came along for the ride, especially when he discovered his new baby cost half as much again as his recent driveway addition.

In fact the RX200t range starts at £39,995 for an S model fitted with the same 2.0 litre petrol engine of the plusher Luxury version (£45,995) and tops out with the £57,995 RX 450h Premier. That version comes with the other engine choice in this new RX range, a 3.5 litre V6 petrol engine that combines with an electric motor to produce a total of 308 horsepower and an official fuel consumption figure (54.3mpg) that shames the harder working 2.0 litre engine in the test car.

That's rated at a mere 36mpg officially and managed just 28mpg in more than 500 miles of mixed motoring, none of it taken at much of a hurry.

The least expensive way of moving to the larger engine with electric assist is the £46,995 RX 450h SE but with a large, heavy body to move about that 50mpg-plus figure is likely to remain a distant dream.

Which points up an obvious omission in this new RX range. Where is the diesel; the power plant of choice for most UK and European buyers of big cars?

The answer is that places where the RX sells best – the States, for instance – simply don't buy diesels, sticking instead to petrol. That alone is going to limit the attractions of the car here in the UK, where hardly any Range Rovers, for instance, are sold without a diesel under the bonnet.



.....
This fourth generation large, luxurious SUV from Toyota's posh division is no shrinking violet in the looks department

But, if you can make the sums add up, the RX200t will provide lots that's good about big car motoring. And it'll do it for years on end without ever going wrong and be serviced for you by a dealer who is part of a select band that tops the poll for customer satisfaction so regularly they ought to have won the cup outright by now.

Most obvious plus point is the amount of space inside the RX, with genuine stretching room in the rear and a huge boot too.

And it does all feel rather fine into the bargain. Rides well too and goes far better than you'd ever expect with such a

smallish engine doing the work. It can get a bit vocal if pressed but exercise a little restraint and the auto gears will propel you in a manner befitting a car made to shrink big mileages.

It won't thrill its driver as the miles go by, but it's not that sort of car. Better to enjoy the trappings of luxury, from a sat nav with an enormous display (but controlled by a fiddly control) to electrically warmed and cooled front seats, powered tailgate, adaptive cruise control, auto dipping headlights and lights that show you the puddles near the doors before you step into them.

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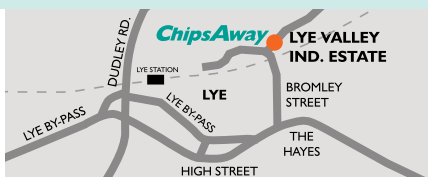
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Jack Addenbrooke - longest-serving



Major Frank Buckley - 15 year stint



Stan Cullis - greatest boss



George Worrall - first secretary



Ted Vizard - 'peace season' boss



Mick McCarthy won the Championship



Current boss Kenny Jackett -12th on list



Ronnie Allen led Wolves into top flight in 1967



John Barnwell with the League Cup in 1980

Kenny manages to make top list

WOLVES boss Kenny Jackett is the 17th longest-serving manager in the country - and there's a team's worth in front of him for service at Molineux.

Of the club's 28 permanent chiefs since their formation in 1877, Jackett, with nearly three years at the helm, is 12th.

Initially the Wolves team was selected by a committee, headed up by the club secretary, George Worrall was the first for seven years and eight months from August 1887 to May 1885, with Jack Addenbrooke replacing him that August.

He is still the longest-serving boss in Wolves' history, with a 36 years and 10 months reign and led Wolves to the FA Cup twice.

The club appointed their first full-time manager, George Jobey in June 1922. He lasted nearly two years before Albert Hoskins was brought in, while Fred Scotchbrook lasted just over a year.

Wembley

Major Frank Buckley arrived in July 1927 and his 15 years and eight months saw the club reach the First Division, finishing runners-up twice in the top flight. A 4-1 defeat to Portsmouth at Wembley saw them lose the 1939 FA Cup final, but they did win the 1942 League 'War' Cup.

Ted Vizard came on board in April 1944, leading them to third in the first 'peace time' season of 1946-47.

Come the summer of 1948, his assistant Stan Cullis would take charge, going on to become the club's most successful manager and make Wolves the biggest team in the country. Three First Division titles, two FA Cups and one Charity Shield came their way along with the first foray into European football in what is

SPORTING MEMORIES

By Craig Birch

Longest-serving Wolves managers:

- 1: Jack Addenbrooke (August 1885-June 1922) 35 years 10 months;
- 2: Stan Cullis (June 1948-September 1964) 16 years three months;
- 3: Major Frank Buckley (July 1927-March 1944) 15 years eight months;
- 4: George Worrall (August 1877-May 1885) Seven years eight months;
- 5: Bill McGarry (November 1968-May 1976) Seven years six months;
- 6: Graham Turner (October 1986-March 1994) Seven years five months;

- 7: Mick McCarthy (July 2006-February 2012) Five years seven months;
- 8: Ted Vizard (April 1944-May 1948) Three years 11 months;
- 9: Dave Jones (January 2001-November 2004) Three years nine months;
- 10: Ronnie Allen (September 1965-November 1968) Three years two months;
- 11: John Barnwell (November 1978-January 1982) Three years two months;
- 12: Kenny Jackett (May 2013-Present) Two years 10 months.

now the Champions League. He was sacked in September 1964 and the club were relegated that season. Andy Beattie was in charge when they went down, he left in September 1965, with Ronnie Allen taking them back up in 1967.

Another purple patch came under Bill McGarry, who left First Division rivals Ipswich Town to take over from the sacked Allen in November 1968. His seven-and-a-half year reign saw Wolves lift the Texaco Cup in 1971, before losing the UEFA Cup final to Tottenham Hotspur 3-2 on aggregate.

But McGarry was axed when the club was relegated in 1976.

His No 2, Sammy Chung, took over and restored them to the First Division at the first attempt, later making way for John Barnwell in November 1978. He delivered Wolves' last major trophy, the League Cup in 1980.

Wolves went into almost-terminal decline under the ownership of the Bhatti brothers. Barnwell resigned and the team were relegated under Ian Greaves, although Graham Hawkins did take them back into the top-flight.

He left after they went down again, with Tommy Docherty later shown the door as they headed for three rel-

egations in a row. McGarry lasted just 61 days of his second spell, with chief scout Sammy Chapman pushed into the role. Brian Little then had a spell as caretaker.

Graham Turner's appointment dragged Wolves off their knees, overseeing two promotions and the Sherpa Van Trophy win at Wembley in 1988.

Sir Jack Hayward bought the club and vowed to restore them to the top-flight again, with Turner removed for former England coach Graham Taylor in March 1994. Taylor, Mark McGhee and Colin Lee all spent Sir Jack's millions and failed to deliver, before Dave Jones got it right through the play-offs in 2003.

They were relegated after one season in the Premier League and Jones was sacked in November 2004, with another former England chief in Glenn Hoddle named as his successor.

He stepped down in May 2006, paving the way for Mick McCarthy's arrival. He took them up as champions and kept them in the Premier League for two campaigns.

Terry Connor, the ill-fated Stale Solbakken and Dean Saunders couldn't prevent a double relegation, with Jackett arriving in May 2013 as Wolves began life in League One.



Sir Jack and Dave Jones celebrate promotion



Graham Turner and legend Steve Bull



Bill McGarry had a successful first spell

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Great start but lessons to be learned

JUNIOR swimmers from Halesowen made the trip to Nuneaton for the first round of the junior league.

Halesowen swimmers swan well and rivalled for first place, but suffered some relay disqualifications that pushed them into second spot. This was an excellent start to the league with some lessons learned for the next round. The final point scores were Leicester Sharks B 237, Halesowen 221, Coalville 216, Haden Hill 165, Oldbury 160.

Stars of the show with two individual wins were Niamh Larkin who triumphed in the 12 years and under butterfly and breaststroke, Caleb Darby in the nine years butterfly and freestyle and Jacob Bailey in the 11 years and under backstroke and breaststroke.

Other individual winners were William Walker and Eve Berrington in the freestyle, Sarah Elfre in the breaststroke and Max Asante-Boaky in the backstroke.

The girls' nine years relay team were also unbeatable, winning both the freestyle and medley relays and included Jasmine Alderson, Bo Luscombe, Olivia Stark, and Francesca Whitehead.

Swimmers then travelled to Droitwich for what was always going to be a testing gala. The team had performed well in the previous two rounds and made it to the A final against the best in the league.

From the start Worcester A and Stourbridge A were proving hard to beat, but the team battled throughout and ended the gala in an excellent third place.

Individual winners were Niamh Larkin in the girls 11 years and under 50m breaststroke and Mark Laing in the men's open 100m backstroke.

The mixed open 6x1 freestyle relay finished the last race with a win and comprised Isobel Bowers, Lauren Hill, Kate Morrice, Mark Laing, Jacob Darby and Jack Simpson.

Pressure? Boss is sure his Glassboys players can hack it

Stourbridge 2 Whitby Town 0
STOURBRIDGE boss Gary Hackett feels his team are well-equipped to cope with the pressure of the final two games of the regular season.

The Glassboys couldn't clinch a place in the Evo-Stik Premier play-offs despite a strong second-half performance which saw two superb goals. Workington's victory at Ashton means Stourbridge may need to beat Frickley away tonight (Thursday) to make sure.

But Hackett said his team were doing everything they could to secure a play-off place and were more than capable of seeing the job through.

Resilient Whitby threatened to take a first-half lead and Michael Roberts hit the bar. Kristian Green provided the pass for Chris Lait to smash home from outside the area on 62 minutes.

The second on 72 was a virtuoso effort from Justin Richards, who picked up a loose ball in the box, turned a half circle and lobbed it into the top corner.

David McTiernan was sent off for the visitors with nine minutes left for a second booking.

Yeltz on road to a hiding at Ashton

Ashton Utd 3 Halesowen Town 0

HALESOWEN Town had a nightmare evening at play-off-chasing Ashton, who are still well in contention for a top-five finish after an emphatic 3-0 win.

The game didn't kick off until 8pm after Yeltz were stuck in heavy traffic on the M6. They were also caught up in an Ashton onslaught.

Chris Baguley played in Martin Pilkington, whose shot was blocked as the hosts made early running.

Pilkington gave them the lead on 18 minutes, rolling in after goalkeeper John King failed to pick up a loose ball. The lead was increased on 35

Football

minutes with a header from captain Jay Gorton. A long-range Baguley effort on 80 minutes secured the points, though Danny Bragoli missed an easy chance late on for a consolation.

Halesowen Town 3 Grantham Town 0

HALESOWEN rounded off their home fixtures with a comprehensive three-goal victory over mid-table Grantham. It meant Halesowen have equalled last season's points tally.

Tyree Clarke grabbed the Yeltz lead in the ninth minute with a fine low finish across goal-

keeper Jake Turner into the bottom corner. Halesowen doubled their lead a minute before the break after Malcolm Melvin was brought down in the penalty area.

Although Melvin's spot-kick was saved brilliantly in the bottom corner by Turner, Kaiman Anderson lofted the ball back over the stranded keeper for captain Jay Denny to head home.

The Yeltz made it 3-0 in the 78th minute when a 20 yard right wing free-kick from Aaron Griffiths sailed straight into the net past Turner through a crowded goalmouth.

Halesowen finish the season at Hyde on Saturday.

Club boost as Dhoolab joins ranks

HALESOWEN Cricket Club have moved to strengthen their batting line-up ahead of the new season with the addition of Priyesh Dhoolab.

The former West Bromwich Dartmouth, Smethwick and Stourbridge player has made a comeback after ending a self-imposed exile from the game over the last two years.

He will be playing alongside some familiar faces as he teams up with skipper Richard Brooker and Wes Griffiths for a second time after their spell at Stourbridge over a decade ago.

Dhoolab has spent the bulk of his career at WBD where he learned his trade from household names like David Houghton, Andy Flower and Mike Rindel and during his time there played county age group cricket for Warwickshire.

Dhoolab said: "It's great to be back in the game again."

"I love the game too much to watch from the sidelines and having been in conversation with some of the Halesowen hierarchy this winter about other matters I got a really good vibe about the place. I can't wait to get the pads on again."

Meanwhile the club have, like most of their neighbours, spent another week wondering when summer will finally arrive after more heavy rain washed out play.

Planned T20 games against Himley and Walsall last weekend fell to the weather. Still upbeat, the club have been re-arranging their pre-season programme.

Saturday sees a 1st XI visit from Astwood Bank to Seth Somers Park, 1pm start, while on Sunday the club visit Kenilworth Wards for the first round of the ECB T20 National Knockout at Glasshouse Lane, Kenilworth.

Cyclists saddle up for ride series latest

HALESOWEN Club cyclists were out in force for the third round of the west Midlands Series, a 65-mile race set in the Malvern Hills.

Coming into the last turn about 1km from the finish Jack Stanton Warren made a move and attacked the bunch along with two others. Although this move was swallowed up on the long approach to the line he did well to hang onto 10th place behind winner Joe Atkins. Oliver Dighton, in his first year as a junior, recorded another top 20 finish closely followed by Joe Hobbs, Patrick Potheringham and first-timer Nick Clayton in his debut West Midlands race.

★★★

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PRIDE AT THIRD PLACE FINISH

Old Halesonians 15 Nuneaton 7

THE final league game of the season saw third-placed Hales meet Nuneaton, in fourth, for an entertaining finale.

Overnight rainfall meant the home staff preparing the training pitch to match standard as the first team pitch was waterlogged.

Hales fielded a strong side and from the kick off they were on the attack with head coach Ben Hughes gliding over for a try after only minutes, converted by Oli Rayner.

Nuns came back with a well worked try wide out which was converted to draw level.

Wingers Luke Smith and Jay Reid tested the opposition and on 26 minutes the latter was given the ball in space and sprinted past his opposite man to score for a half-time 12-7 lead.

Second half pressure from Hales led to a penalty converted by Rayner.

Further pressure should have seen more scores for Hales but Nuneaton defended well.

Vice-chairman Simon Hussey said: "This has been a long difficult season but we should be really proud of our third place position in a league against some strong physical sides."

"We finished 22 points above Peterborough in fourth place which shows how strong and consistent we have been apart from the odd result."

Hales first team meet Birmingham Solihull in the semi final of the North Midlands Cup at Portway tomorrow night (Friday), kick off 7.30.

Nuneaton 2nds 31 Old Halesonians 2nds 15
OLD Hales had the upper hand during the first 10 minutes but couldn't penetrate the Nuneaton defence. Gradually Nuneaton gained more possession and on 14 minutes they scored close to the posts and the conversion was successful.

Old Hales were awarded a penalty after 24 minutes and Luke Fenton landed the kick, but the Nuneaton full-back raced 25m to score under the posts for a converted try and a 14-3 lead.

A Sam Foster try reduced the deficit, but a penalty try, converted, made it 21-8. Mike Topping's try, converted by Fenton, closed the gap.

Old Hales were reduced to 13 players when they received two yellow cards for infringements at the mauls. Nuneaton capitalised and added a penalty followed by a try from close range.

Old Halesonians 3rds lost 46-34 to Malvern 3rds.

Pirates plunder annual trophy



Old Hales under-9s pirates celebrate winning the Kings Norton tournament

OLD Halesonians Pirates under-9s came home with the treasure from the Kings Norton RFC annual mini-rugby tournament.

Ten teams in all from eight clubs took part. They were initially split into two pools of five with the top three from each progressing through to the latter stages and the chance to compete for silverware.

Old Hales were confident of a top three finish and beat Kings Norton Reds in their first group game eight tries to nil.

A five try to nil win over Bromsgrove followed before Old Hales then beat last year's winners Droitwich 3-2. It meant Old Hales topped the

pool and progressed to the final. Kings Norton Black topped Pool A and provided the opposition for the final.

In a fantastic game, the score was tied at a try each at half-time, so the match was delicately poised.

It ended at two tries all so rules stated the contest would be determined by golden try extra time – and Old Hales snatched the all-important score to be crowned as champions.

A spokesman said: "A fantastic day of rugby from all the teams involved, and a real squad effort from Old Hales u-9s to walk away as tournament winners 2016."

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